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The Purchase of Alaska: The Reasons Offered by Representative Nathaniel P. Banks Examined, with Special Emphasis on the Interest of William H. Seward in the Far East

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THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA: THE REASONS OFFERED BY REPRESENTATIVE NATHANIEL P. BANKS EXAMINED, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE INTEREST OF WILLIAM H. SEWARD IN THE FAR EAST

by

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LIFE

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ABBREVIATIONS

The list below indicates the full titles of periodicals frequently cited in the footnotes.

AHR	American Historical Review
MVHR	Mississippi Valley Historical Review
PHR	Pacific Historical Review
WHQ	Washington Historical Quarterly

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

So often in the daily newspapers articles are printed listing new "firsts" in the atomic age; for instance, the nuclear submarine Nautilus and the sending of Polaris rockets and intercontinental ballistic missiles into outer space. Similarly, Alaska can be listed as having two "firsts" to its credit, for besides being the first noncontiguous territory purchased by the United States, it recently has become the first noncontiguous state of the United States. The stories of its fisheries, furs, and gold, not to mention its coal and other mineral resources, have been the stories of trappers and adventurers for the past two hundred years. Books, articles, and newspapers abound in extolling these riches and in attracting many travelers annually.

If then the United States is so fortunate to possess Alaska, the question concerning the background and especially the reasons for the purchase naturally arises. This is the purpose of the thesis, namely, to evaluate the reasons that have been offered for the purchase of Alaska. There are apparently two possible methods of handling this problem; either examining all the pertinent documents and then compiling a list of reasons or discovering a list

of reasons offered by some contemporary witness of the purchase and then setting about to evaluate those in the light of the writing that has been done on the subject. It is the latter method that will be employed in this essay.

Basically the outline for the thesis has been drawn from a reading of Henry W. Clark's History of Alaska, in the chapter in which he treats of the purchase. Here he attempts to analyze the reasons for the purchase listed, so he claims, by Senator Charles Sumner. These reasons can be briefly summarized as: the desire of the Pacific coast for fisheries and other privileges, the refusal of Russia to renew the charter of the Russian American Company, the friendship of Russia and the United States, the necessity of preventing England from getting the territory, the creation of new industrial interests on the Pacific necessary to the supremacy of our empire on sea and land, and lastly, the securing of unlimited commerce with Japan and China. Clark briefly comments on the first four reasons separately and then adds, "The last two reasons as part of our big talk on Manifest Destiny or its equivalent may possibly have weight. They lead us to the inevitable conclusion that the chief reason for the United States buying Alaska was William H. Seward." But he believes that no one can definitely determine whether Seward desired to aggrandize America and make her supreme on this continent, or whether he was interested in a good base in the Aleutians, or whether he wanted to gain popularity in his

party by his action. In conclusion Clark maintains that certainly the purchase "was not done in any spirit of far-sighted policy by the American government."[1]

Certain facts, however, do not seem to substantiate the above statements. Although Clark affirms that his book is a "compendium of the valuable research of such scholars as Golder, Stefansson, Andrews, Spicer, Farrand and others," he seems to have overlooked some important contributions to the question made before the book was published.[2] Besides, some additional insights into the problem, scattered in various sources, have been offered since the appearance of the book and will be incorporated here. Even though another history of Alaska has been written in recent years, a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the purchase apparently was not made.[3] Hence such a study seems warranted.

As is clear from the title, the thesis will attempt to examine the six reasons for the purchase offered by Representative Banks. To fulfill this task, it is necessary to show the early interest of

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[1] Henry W. Clark, History of Alaska (New York, 1930), pp. 79-80. This was republished under the title Alaska: The Last Frontier (New York, 1939). The reasons as listed must be ascribed to Representative Nathaniel P. Banks, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations. Cf. U. S. Congress, House, Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives, No. 37, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington, 1868), p. 11.

[2] Clark, x.

[3] Stuart R. Tompkins, Alaska: Promyshlennik and Sourdough (Norman, 1952), pp. 188-190.

Russia in Russian America. This will be followed by considering the growing commercial interests of the United States and Great Britain in and around Russian America and the conflicts that arose between the two countries. The next chapter will relate the changing attitude of Russia towards her American possessions and especially towards expansion. Coupled with this discussion will be a study of the early attempts at a sale of the territory and the purchase itself. In the following chapter a study of the first four reasons listed by Representative Banks will be made as these affected Russia and Great Britain. The final chapter will treat of the last two reasons as they showed the attitude of the United States towards expansion and commerce, especially in the Pacific and the Far East. Here the interest of William H. Seward in the Far East will be emphasized in order to determine the extent of its importance in reference to the purchase. It becomes apparent, then, that the purchase of Alaska ought to be viewed, not as an isolated incident, but as part of a larger framework of events, for the purchase, involving two countries, was affected by their foreign relations, not only with each other, but also principally with Great Britain. The triangle thus formed by these countries is the basic structure within which the purchase will be considered.

CHAPTER II

RUSSIA IN RUSSIAN AMERICA: THE BEGINNINGS

If someone were to look for the key to Russian foreign policy in the Pacific and the Far East from the days of Peter the Great until the days of Alexander II in 1850-1860, that key is furnished in the Amur River Valley. This area was strategically important to Russia because in 1689 it was her only outlet to the sea on the Pacific coast. Russia was then moving to the east by way of Siberia, while at the same time other European countries were making their first contacts with China by an all-sea route. The first Russian adventurers consisted of explorers, fur traders, and fugitives from the law. Once they had penetrated into far eastern Siberia, it was natural that they would move south into the valley of the Amur River. Here a conflict arose between the Russian adventurers and the tribal peoples who theoretically recognized the sovereignty of China. In 1689 a boundary settlement was effected by the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which provided that the Albasin, a Russian outpost on the upper Amur, was to be destroyed, that the Russians were to withdraw completely from the valley, and finally, that the ridge of the Stanovoi Mountains was to be considered the boundary line separating the two empires. It was China's first

treaty with a Western power and one which was to be a controlling influence over the relations of the two countries for the next two centuries.[1]

Because of this loss of a strategic point, Russian expansion turned northward and further east. Peter the Great, who began his reign in 1689, the same year as the signing of the treaty, affirmed that there were three points of importance to Russia: the mouths of the Don, the Neva, and the Amur Rivers.[2] Of these three, however, the Amur was pre-eminent, for the loss of this river region had deprived eastern Siberia and later Russian America of a source of food supply. Secondly it hindered Russia from obtaining a firm basis in Chinese commerce, and thirdly it checked any plans for opening commercial relations with Japan. Peter the Great was well aware of the significance of the Amur, but he was held in check to obtain the three strongholds for Russia. Not until 1721 did he obtain the Neva, but he was unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain direct access to the Black Sea through the Don. Four years later he sent Captain Vitus Bering to find out the relation between Asia and America, although it seems that he was to "open up the Amur question possibly in connection with an expedition by land."[3] In

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[1] Robert J. Kerner, "Russian Expansion to America: Its Bibliographical Foundations," Bibliographical Society of America Papers, XXV (1931), 111; Paul H. Clyde, The Far East (New York, 1949), p. 95; Frank A. Golder, Russian Expansion on the Pacific, 1641-1850 (Cleveland, 1914), p. 64.

[2] Kerner, pp. 111-112.

[3] Ibid. 113.

1728, however, during the course of his first voyage, Bering was unsuccessful in solving the problem. In 1732 he was ordered to undertake a second voyage to learn about the land which it was surmised was the American continent and to speak, if possible, with the natives to determine if the land was definitely the shore of America. Although this expedition did not set sail until 1741, it did achieve an important opening of an era of Russian expansion, for Bering came close to the American continent and could see at a distance the snow-capped heights of Mount St. Elias. In the name of Russia he claimed groups of hitherto unknown islands, saw the Aleuts at Nagai Island, claimed more islands in the Aleutian chain, and subsequently died on one of the Komandorsky Islands. It should be noted that it was by accident, not by intention, that Russia came into possession of territory in America, for Peter the Great was not interested in founding colonies, but in knowing the relation of Asia to America.

With the establishment of Russian claims, many adventurers visited the Aleutian Islands to traffic in furs, for these islands served as a chain from Kamchatka to America. No permanent establishment, however, was erected either on the islands or on the continent. The wealthier traders came to St. Petersburg to ask for special privileges and to bring charges against their competitors. In addition to these Russian promoters there were foreigners who offered to lead expeditions of discovery and to extend Russian commerce and empire in the Indies and America, for this was the

last part of the eighteenth century when European capitals were full of such projects. Catherine, the Empress at the time, had to decide whether or not it was for the best interest of her empire to acquire overseas possessions, far from the seat of government. Expansion was not a novel idea for Russia as is evidenced by her annexation of contiguous territory; but the North American territory was different for it was across the sea. Catherine realized that in order to hold colonies as far away as these a nation must have an overflowing population and a navy. Russia had neither. To understand Russia's problem in Russian America these two factors--the need of a surplus population and of a navy--must be borne in mind in the background of Russia's desire to win control of the Amur River Valley once more.

After thinking the subject over, the Empress decided to act. Her answer was a refusal to furnish men, ships, or money to help the adventurers. In 1787 two Siberian merchants again laid before the Empress a petition to colonize that land and to extend the limits of the Russian empire, if the Empress would grant them and their company special commercial privileges; but Catherine followed her policy by declaring that the lesson of England's loss of her colonies in America should be a warning to other nations that would attempt the same course. Furthermore, all Siberians were needed in their native land, for, according to the Empress, one hundred Siberians were worth one thousand Europeans. Thus she favored a <u>laissez-faire</u> policy of claiming the territory, but not of holding

or governing it.[4]

With the accession of Paul I, however, such a policy would not withstand the interference of the trading ships of other nations. In 1776 Captain James Cook sailed to the shores of America on the initiative of the East India Company. He recorded on a map under new English names all the places he visited and thus established a basis for an English claim to their discovery. Paul I was then faced with the alternative of withdrawing from the American continent or of governing the territory. For a time he seriously considered the advisability of prohibiting all Russians from going to the territory, which would be equivalent to abandoning the possessions. Nonetheless, there were some ministers of state who dissuaded him from such a move. Yet the problem grew steadily worse, for between 1787 and 1794 four English captains had reached the North American shores and one of them, Captain Meares, thought it advantageous to obtain a base on one of the Kurile Islands. In addition to these "new" discoveries by the English, a growing rivalry between England and Russia commenced over fur trading. Captain Cook and his successors were successful in obtaining sea-otter skins from the Aleutian Islands and sold them at considerable profit in Canton, China. This was a double blow to Russia, for not only were the English depriving them of furs in territory they

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[4] Frank A. Golder, "The Attitude of the Russian Government Toward Alaska," The Pacific Ocean in History, ed. H. Morse Stephens and Herbert E. Bolton (New York, 1917), pp. 270-271.

claimed, but also were taking advantage of the lack of a Russian commercial stronghold through which her furs could enter China. In 1794 Russia was able, nevertheless, to obtain an official re-establishment of trade with China which further aggravated the relations with England.

If then Russian America was to be retained by Russia, the further question was how was it to be governed. Two suggestions were made: one favoring a crown colony, the other favoring a private company similar to the Hudson's Bay Company. Up to this time individual private trading companies had operated under governmental protection in the North American shores. By 1790 the Shelikhov-Golikov Company outstripped all others. In the latter part of that year Shelikhov had employed Alexander Andreyevich Baranov, a merchant of Kargopol, whose name and influence were felt in Russian America until his replacement by Lieutenant-Captain Leontii A. Hagemeister on December 1, 1818. By a ukase in 1799 the Shelikhov-Golikov Company merged with the Mylnikov group and became the Russian American Company. All other companies, by the same imperial edict, were to be suppressed. The Company, granted a charter for twenty years, was greatly encouraged by the government, especially by the other generous grants and monopolistic privileges which had been offered to it. To all appearances a new empire in the West was about to open; but soon unfavorable reports of death, starvation, and mismanagement found their way to the capital. Twice in the twenty-year period a special officer was sent to investigate conditions

there. In 1802 the tribe of Tlingits (also known as Tlinkets and whom the Russians called Koliuzhams or Koloshams or Kolosh) swooped down upon the Russian fortifications at Sitka and massacred the inhabitants. Added to this was the starvation of a number of Russians, since the food supply from Siberia that had hitherto supplied these Pacific coasts by means of a treacherous overland route was cut off. Nikolai Rezanov, brother-in-law of Shelikhov, had been despatched a few months before this massacre to strengthen Russia's position in the Pacific through the ships of the Imperial Navy given to him. He was, moreover, to use the present situation to renew attempts at establishing diplomatic relations with Japan, which had been closed since 1793, and to get supplies to the Pacific colonies. Although he was unsuccessful in opening diplomatic relations with Japan, he hastened back to Petropavlovsk whence he embarked on his journey to America to investigate the Russian American Company. Arriving in August, 1804, he found that the Company was faced with many misfortunes, the chief of which was a lack of agreement between the Russians and the Kolosh. It was not until July 16, 1805 that the Kolosh formally submitted and signed a treaty with Baranov by which they recognized Russian sovereignty. This did not solve all the Company's problems. The distressing shortage of food was an acute problem that had its repercussions in the sickness, death, disease, and in the rancor among the men. To try to solve this difficulty, Rezanov loaded a ship with furs and other goods and sailed to San Francisco where he

thought he could obtain a cargo of grain to relieve the shortage. Here through his marriage to the daughter of the commandant he was successful in obtaining the food supplies. Although he wanted to establish a permanent settlement around the Columbia River, he met with no success. When Rezanov set sail for St. Petersburg to report to the Czar on the conditions of the Company, Baranov again took full control.

Since the Siberian route was weaker and hence less reliable for obtaining food, and since he could not obtain it from the Spanish colonies in California, Baranov turned to the American traders. In 1803 Joseph O'Cain had arrived in the O'Cain at a time when the food stores were low in Kodiak. Faced with a perilous winter and possible starvation, Baranov bought about 10,000 rubles' worth of goods from O'Cain. The latter proposed to Baranov to lend him Aleuts who would be of assistance in capturing sea otters on the shores off Lower California and the Farallones. This "poaching" became the regular practice for both Russians and Americans, so that many American captains were willing to follow O'Cain's idea. Combined with poaching was the practice of smuggling goods ashore and selling them, despite Spanish regulations which forbade commerce with the missions. By 1815 this double system of poaching and smuggling was the common way by which the Russian American Company was able to subsist. Spain was hardly able to intervene in this matter, since she, along with the other European powers, was engaged in the Napoleonic Wars. The Pacific coast was last, if

not least, in importance in diplomatic concerns.

If then the Russian American Company was struggling to exist and the Russian government knew of its plight, why did Russia want the Company to govern the territory? The answer lies in the fact that Russian saw that it was best to have a company which would look after the interests of the government so that one day the Russian government, in taking the territory under its own direction, would add a province useful to the whole nation.[5] The province intended by the government was to include not only the Aleutians, Kamchatka, and Russian America, but also California, the Sandwich Islands, the southern part of Sakhalin, and the mouth of the Amur River. These latter were to be obtained by the Company in the name of the Russian government, so that the whole northern part of the Pacific would become an inland sea of the Russian empire.[6] In brief, this was a plan of direct colonial expansion.

By a curious move diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States were begun. The Russians in Russian America had had weapons far superior to the natives and hence they felt a sense of security in resisting any attacks. The 1802 massacre at Sitka proved otherwise, for then the Kolosh were using firearms obtained,

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[5]Cf. Edward de Stoeckl to Prince Alexander Gorchakov, July 12/24, 1867, ed. Hunter Miller, "Russian Opinion on the Cession of Alaska," AHR, XLVIII (April 1943), 527.

[6]Semen B. Okun, The Russian-American Company, ed. B.D. Grekov, trans. Carl Ginsburg (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 50.

so the Russians claimed, from American petty traders. Thus the Russians blamed the massacre on the Boston traders and laid a complaint before the Russian government. No word was received from St. Petersburg at Washington until 1808 when Czar Alexander I despatched Andrei Dashkov, the Russian consul-general in Philadelphia, and named him "charge d'affaires near the congress of the United States." The Czar, through Dashkov, stated that the traffic of ammunition and liquor was illicit and proposed that both countries come to some arrangement by which trading by Americans would be restricted to the port of Kodiak in Russian America. The American reply, made in 1810, questioned such a Russian proposal. If the Indians were subjects of the Russian Czar, then the United States was bound to let its citizens to be punished according to Russian law. If they were not subject to Russian sovereignty, but were independent tribes, then any citizen of any nation could trade with them, unless it were a question of contraband in time of war.[7] The two countries never came to any agreement on this matter, but the incident is significant since it established an entrance of the United States into the diplomatic relations on the Pacific northwest coast.

Further encroachment on Russian-claimed territory was increased in 1810 when John Jacob Astor planted a trading post,

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[7]Victor J. Farrar, "The Background of the Purchase of Alaska," WHQ, XIII (April 1922), 93-94.

Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. This post was sold by American citizens to the British North West Company in the War of 1812, but was restored to American ownership when Lord Castlereagh, British Foreign Secretary, wrote to Sir Charles Bagot, British minister at St. Petersburg, that the United States had true ownership, yet he disliked the brusque way in which the Americans were seeking to regain possession. This restoration in 1818 was not intended to affect the claims of either the Russians or the British, although John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State in 1826, would judiciously use this to the detriment of Great Britain.[8]

Meanwhile in 1812 the Russian American Company had penetrated southward to 38° north latitude where Fort Ross, near Bodega Bay, was established. This colony was ostensibly to supply the northern posts with grain and meat. Maintained despite Spanish protests, Fort Ross was held by the Russian American Company in the hope that some future good fortune could make the settlement permanent. Not until 1841 was it abandoned by the Russians and sold to John Sutter.[9]

Besides this further intrusion on Spanish territory, in 1819 the United States signed the Adams-Onis Treaty according to which

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[8] Samuel F. Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1949), pp. 281-286; 518.

[9] Stuart R. Tompkins, "Drawing the Alaskan Boundary," The Canadian Historical Review, XXVI (March 1945), 3.

the northern boundary of Spain's possessions was fixed at 42° north latitude. The whole situation was thus enveloped in a state of confusion with three powers remaining in the contest for the north Pacific--Russia, Great Britain, and the United States--all with claims that were ill-defined. The British claim extended from about the Arctic to as far south as San Francisco, while Russia's claim starting in the north as Britain's extended only as far south as the Columbia River. Yet the least clear by far was the American claim, for by the Louisiana Purchase a large unknown portion of the Pacific coast was included and was added to the sovereignty claimed over the Columbia River by reason of the discovery of Captain Gray. Within the next few years these claims were to be adjudicated after much wrangling by all three antagonists.

The basis of this diplomatic controversy, however, should be studied before we continue the narrative of the outcome of these global claims. At the heart of these claims was the conflict among the Russian, British, and American fur traders. When the diplomatic conference opened, the negotiators relied upon the maps and charts of these fur traders for the adjudication of the claims. In the political action of Great Britain and Russia the fur-trading influence was particularly forceful, since each country was represented by powerful monopolies--the Russian American Company and the North West Company, which was amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. Both of these companies maintained trading posts

on the mainland and the adjacent islands. The American fur traders, however, represented a large number of petty capitalists. This was true especially after the failure of Astor's Pacific Fur Company, for after 1813 American trading was exclusively maritime, that is, the trading was conducted aboard ship rather than at land bases or trading posts.[10] As a result the American traders did not have as strong a foundation for territorial claims north of the Columbia River, nor were they as influential in obtaining government action as the British and Russian companies were.

On July 8/20, 1819 the first charter of the Russian American Company expired.[11] Eight years previously the Company had been put under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and it was from this office that the Czar had sought information on the Company's operations and from which he expected some recommendations. The report of the investigating committee primarily dealt with the loss of trade encountered by the Company at the hands of the American and British traders. Thus before a new charter would be issued it was necessary to establish the boundaries within which the Company was to operate, and above all to exclude any trading except by the Russian American Company. By the new charter granted

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[10] John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Berkeley, 1957), p. 113.

[11] July 8/20, 1819 indicates the combination of Old Style and New Style dates.

September 13/25, 1821 the Russian American Company was placed under the Ministry of Finance and became a quasi-governmental body. The chief manager of the Company was to be a captain of the Imperial Navy while the other officers of the Company were to be naval officers. This restriction was so placed in order to obtain a Company fleet, a project equally important to the Company and to the government.

But nine days before renewing the charter of the Russian American Company, September 4/16, 1821, Czar Alexander I issued a ukase by which he decreed that to Russian subjects alone was reserved the right of "the pursuits of commerce, whaling, and fishery, and of all other industry on all islands, posts, and gulfs, including the whole of the north-west coast of America, beginning from Behring Straits to the 51° of northern latitude, also from the Aleutian Islands to the eastern coast of Siberia, as well as along the Kurile Islands from Behring Straits to the south cape of the Islands of Urup, viz., to the 45° 50' north latitude . . ."[12] Foreign vessels, moreover, were forbidden to approach within less than one hundred Italian miles of the coasts at any point.[13] The

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[12] U. S. Congress, Senate, Senate Documents, No. 162, Proceedings of the Alaska Boundary Tribunal Convened at London . . . under the Treaty Concluded at Washington, January 24, 1903 . . . 58th Cong., 2nd Sess., (Washington, 1904), II, 25-26. Hereinafter this will be cited as A. B. T.

[13] An Italian mile is equal to 6,080 feet. Cf. George Davidson, The Alaska Boundary (San Francisco, 1903), p. 44, n. 2.

new charter issued on September 13/25, 1821 was somewhat more precise in delineating the boundaries by granting the Company:

> The privilege of carrying on, to the exclusion of all other Russians, and of the subjects of foreign States, all industries, on the shores of North-western America which have from time immemorial belonged to Russia, commencing from the northern point of the Island of Vancouver, under 51° north latitude to Behring Straits and beyond them, and on all the islands which belong to that coast, as well as on the others situated between it and the eastern shore of Siberia, and also on those of the Kurile Islands where the Company has carried on industries, as far as the southern extremity of the Island of Urup under 45° 50'.[14]

Though the ukase was aimed primarily at the elimination of American traders in the coastal waters of the north Pacific, it also was injurious to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company.[15] Consequently, the controversy was both over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights.

When instructions were sent to the Russian ministers to bring this imperial decree to the notice of the governments concerned, an immediate protest was raised by the United States and Great Britain. Castlereagh's response was a strong warning that Britain was to be understood as reserving all her rights. In Washington John Quincy Adams informed Pierre Poletica, Russian minister at Washington, that the President was surprised to learn about the Russian claim of territory as far south as 51° north latitude.

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[14] A. B. T., II, 27.

[15] Ibid. I, Pt. II, 63-64; II, 95-97, Baron Nicolay, Russian Minister at London to Marquis of Londonderry, British Foreign Secretary, October 31/November 12, 1821.

Before any claims would be laid to this area in the Pacific, it was expected that a delineation of boundaries would be effected by treaty between the two countries. Adams also questioned Poletica about the extraordinary exclusion of United States vessels beyond the usual territorial jurisdiction, and wondered whether Russia could justify this ukase under the laws of nations.[16]

When the Czar learned how his decree had been received by Great Britain and the United States, he immediately invited the powers concerned to discuss the matter so that some agreement might be reached. It should be borne in mind that, as later events were to prove, the Czar agreed and informed the powers indirectly that no attempts would be made to enforce the offending clauses of the ukase, but that the decree would not be withdrawn. This was done so that negotiations could be held in a somewhat easy atmosphere. At first Alexander intended that the negotiations should be carried on with the American government through Pierre Poletica; but because the Russian minister became ill, he was recalled and was replaced by Baron Tuyll who was instructed to have the discussions transferred to St. Petersburg. There was some delay in his arrival in America by way of London. It was during this period that the Russian government saw the wisdom of having the three countries involved meet at the Russian capital for the settlement of the issue. Thus Tuyll's instructions were changed so that the

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[16]Bemis, p. 496.

three plenipotentiaries could meet in the Russian capital. On February 20, 1823 powers of a plenipotentiary were issued to Sir Charles Bagot, while those of Henry Middleton, the American minister at St. Petersburg, were not issued until July 18, 1823 because of the delay of Tuyll, and they did not reach him until October that year. The Russian plenipotentiaries, Count Charles Nesselrode, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Poletica, whose health had been restored, did not receive their powers until February 20, 1824. These dates are important, for, although the negotiators initiated proceedings prior to the reception of the powers of the Russian plenipotentiaries, these discussions were but preliminary and hence not binding on any party.

Since two of the three parties concerned were representing, indirectly at least, government-sponsored fur companies, it would be well to outline the demands of each company in the dispute. The Hudson's Bay Company, recently organized to include the North West Company whose claims in the Pacific Northwest it immediately espoused, under the direction of the capable John Henry Pelly, sought to obtain the right to trade within the area of the Fraser River and to force the Russian claims as far back as the ukase of Paul I in 1799 so that there would be some room for expansion for their own Company, and that the Russians be "kept at a distance." The two remaining objectives of the Company were to "secure transit between inland territories and the Pacific Ocean" and to preserve inviolate "under Company control the Mackenzie River system, one of

the richest fur provinces on the continent." By the energetic effort of the British Foreign Office all these objectives were achieved.[17]

If a distinction be drawn between the extreme claims in the ukase of 1821 and the minimum demands of the Russian American Company, no serious obstacle for a basis of agreement could be envisioned. Baron Tuyll wrote to Count Nesselrode that if it were impossible to extend Russian frontiers farther south, it would be indispensable that the frontier be fixed at least at 55° north latitude, or better yet, "at the southern point of the archipelago of the Prince of Wales and the Observatory Inlet, which are situated almost under that parallel." If the frontier were put nearer than this it would encroach upon Novo-Archangelsk (Sitka) which was then in 57° 3' north latitude.[18] The basic objectives of the Russian American Company, then, were the recognition of Russian sovereignty over the Prince of Wales Archipelago and over a strip on the continent vast enough to counteract any increase of trade by Russia's foreign rivals.[19] By 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Company had not clashed at any point in the Pacific Northwest. The boundary dispute in which their governments

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[17] Galbraith, p. 127.

[18] A. B. T., II, 113, Tuyll to Nesselrode, October 21/ November 2, 1822.

[19] Ibid. 137-140, Poletica to Nesselrode, November 3, 1823. It is not clear whether the date given is Old Style or New Style.

were then engaged was concerned with determining the sovereignty over a wilderness between the two companies' spheres of influence, thus providing a no-man's-land into which each hoped that it could expand.[20] It was mutual convenience rather than absolute right that served as a basis for the boundary negotiations.

Although the objectives of both fur companies were clear in the minds of the respective negotiators, British and Russian, there was no clarity concerning the American demands, at least in the minds of the British negotiators. British Foreign Secretary George Canning wanted to reach an agreement with the United States on the maritime part of the dispute, and then both would approach Russia for a settlement. Canning was under the misapprehension that the United States had no pretensions north of 51° north latitude. This erroneous judgment resulted from a letter of his cousin, Stratford Canning, who assumed that this was the position of the United States on the question. On May 3, 1823 he wrote to the Foreign Secretary the extraordinary statement that "He [Adams] added that the United States had no territorial claims of their own as high as the 51st degree of latitude . . ."[21] Such an unqualified statement easily led to a misinterpretation. Thus on July 12, 1823 Foreign Secretary Canning wrote to Bagot in St. Petersburg and relayed the information he had obtained from his cousin in

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[20] Ibid. 118, Count Lieven, Russian minister at London, to G. Canning, January 19/31, 1823.

[21] Ibid. 120, Stratford Canning to G. Canning, May 3, 1823.

Washington: ". . . the part of the question in which the American Government is peculiarly desirous of establishing a concert with this country is that which concerns the extravagant assumption of maritime jurisdiction." Having discussed that part, he then added: "The other part of the question which relates to territorial claim and boundary is perhaps susceptible of a separate settlement."[22] This statement is somehwat cautious since Canning had not been approached by Richard Rush, the American minister in London.

In the month of August, moreover, George Canning failed to interpret the advances of Rush, for at that time Rush claimed that he had not received instructions in regard to the northwest coast. Hence this matter fell into the background when the two negotiators were discussing a possible joint action of the United States and Great Britain in South America. By October 17/29, 1823 Sir Charles Bagot in a despatch to Foreign Secretary Canning had at last learned from Henry Middleton that the United States, far from being uninterested in the territorial assertions of Russia, was ready to assert equal claims with Great Britain to territory between 42° and 61° north latitude.[23] By January 15, 1824 Foreign Secretary Canning was able to address himself to Bagot in these words: "I then found, what I had not before been led to suspect, that Mr. Rush had himself authority to enter into negotiations with

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[22] Ibid. 123-124, G. Canning to Bagot, July 12, 1823.

[23] Ibid. 130, Bagot to G. Canning, October 17/29, 1823.

us as to the respective claims of Great Britain and the United States on the northwest coast of America, although he does not appear to have been instructed to invite such negotiations here if we should prefer leaving it to be conducted at St. Petersburg."[24] He then instructed the British minister to pursue the negotiations alone with Russia and sketch alternative boundaries that would be acceptable to Great Britain. These latter were suggested by Pelly, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. In effect, Canning had been faced with three alternatives:[25] to come to some understanding with the United States and then contend with Russia over the northern boundary; or to allow negotiations to proceed as before in St. Petersburg; or to make the Convention of 1818 with the United States a tripartite agreement by which all the territory beyond the Rocky Mountains would be open equally to the citizens of all three countries.[26] Since he had decided that the best solution would be a separate negotiation with Russia to be carried on at St. Petersburg, our attention must now be turned to the Russian capital.[27]

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[24] Ibid. 144, G. Canning to Bagot, January 15, 1824.

[25] Tompkins, Alaska, p. 139.

[26] The Convention of 1818, between the United States and Great Britain, stipulated that for ten years the whole area west of the Rocky Mountains should be open to citizens of both countries without any prejudice to territorial claims of either country. Cf. Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America, ed. Hunter Miller (Washington, 1931), II, 658-661.

[27] Although President Monroe had enunciated the non-colonization principle of the Monroe Doctrine on December 2, 1823, it had a relatively small role in the discussion of the treaties in St. Petersburg. Cf. A.B.T. II, 77, Middleton to Adams, February 5/17, 1824.

The negotiations were then begun by each country separately and were carried on concurrently though independently, with little communication between the British and American negotiators. Middleton, having begun his conferences with the Russian plenipotentiaries in early April, 1824, had been instructed as early as July 22, 1823 by Secretary of State Adams: "With regard to the territorial claim . . . we are willing to agree to the boundary line within which the Emperor Paul granted exclusive privileges to the Russian American Company, that is to say, latitude 55°." But concerning Great Britain's claim, Adams added: "As the British ambassador at St. Petersburg is authorized and instructed to negotiate likewise upon this subject, it may be proper to adjust the interests and claims of the three powers by a joint convention."[28] As soon as the April negotiations commenced, Middleton notified both the Russian and British representatives that if they tried to negotiate on territorial questions without taking cognizance of the American claims, he would be forced to protest such an arrangement.

Middleton and the Russian representatives proceeded with their conferences without any difficulties. The American minister offered the Russians recognition of the fifty-fifth degree parallel of north latitude as the boundary, if Russia in turn would abrogate the offensive maritime restriction of the ukase of 1821 and would grant trading privileges along the coast. In early April a

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28 Ibid. 47-51, Adams to Middleton, July 22, 1823.

satisfactory treaty was concluded. Further negotiations brought an agreement that the Prince of Wales Island should belong wholly to Russia, thus placing the parallel of 54° 40' as the southern limit of Russian occupation or settlement and the northern limit of occupation by American citizens. All the area of the north Pacific Ocean was to be open to the subjects of both powers for trading and fishing, provided that they were not to resort to any part of the coast occupied by the other power without permission. For a period of ten years the ships of both countries were to be allowed freedom to frequent the coastal waters. A further stipulation was that traffic in firearms and liquor to the natives was forbidden.[29] By April 17, 1824 a final agreement was reached and the two countries signed the convention.

The conference between Bagot and the Russian plenipotentiaries began on February 28, 1824 and ran concurrently with the Russo-American negotiations. Besides a lack of cordiality between the two sides, two terms agreed upon by Russia and the United States hampered the attainment of the extreme pretensions of the Hudson's Bay Company which Bagot sought. The first of these was the acceptance of 54° 40' north latitude as the Russian southern boundary. The second was that the United States was willing to bypass their extreme pretensions if the Russians would yield trading concessions. Thus Bagot was forced to accept the boundary line. Yet Great

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[29] Treaties, ed. Miller (Washington, 1933), III, 151-155.

Britain could afford to yield this point without giving up the security of the Hudson's Bay Company, whereas Russia could not afford to make concessions without the risk of endangering her own interests. Because both sides were obstinate in their demands, the discussion was prolonged. The Russian plenipotentiaries did concede one point, however, and by doing so weakened the position of the Russian American Company whose interests they represented, for they agreed to permit the British to enter freely the interior on all rivers that emptied into the ocean through the coastal strip opposite the Alexander Archipelago. As later events proved, this concession only inspired the Hudson's Bay Company with the idea of establishing interior posts and thus cut off a considerable portion of the Russian fur trade at its source, since the coast Indians with whom the Russians traded received their furs from the Indians of the interior. When this concession was offered, the Hudson's Bay Company had not indicated a desire to enter the maritime fur trade. Free navigation of the coast was incorporated in the Anglo-Russian convention because it had been obtained by the United States, and because the British whaling interests had represented their proposals to the Foreign Office.[30]

By April, 1824 the Russian and British negotiators had reached an agreement on the boundary issue. Final settlement had to be postponed for ten months, however, because of disputes over

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[30] Galbraith, p. 131.

rights of trade and navigation by British subjects, who wanted the right in perpetuity to trade at Sitka, to navigate along the coast from Portland Canal to 60° north latitude, and to visit the territory north of this parallel under certain stipulations. Russia, on the other hand, agreed to half of this proposal by conceding the privileges of navigation south of 60° north latitude for only ten years, but refused to concede any privileges north of that parallel. Further discussion took place over the east and west boundaries, the results of which were incorporated into the treaty signed on February 28, 1825. By this treaty Russia and Great Britain, now represented by Stratford Canning in place of Bagot, agreed that the boundary between their territories in the Pacific Northwest would begin at the most southern point of Prince of Wales Island, in 54° 40' north latitude, and this boundary followed the Portland Canal to its head at 56° north latitude. From the point where the line intersected the 141st meridian it was projected on that degree to the Arctic Ocean. British subjects were to enjoy the privilege of trading at Sitka for ten years, just as were the Americans. They were, moreover, permitted to trade in the Russian coastal waters south of Mount St. Elias for the same period of time. Above all, the British were granted the right in perpetuity to travel into and from the interior on the rivers that flowed into the ocean through the Russian Coastal strip.[31]

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[31] Ibid. 134.

From the discussion of the preliminaries and the final agreement in these two treaties it is apparent that the negotiators had argued much to obtain the rights and privileges granted. Yet the Hudson's Bay Company was not satisfied. Indeed, the British government had ably and skilfully handled the interests of the Company in the negotiations and even obtained a right of traveling on the interior rivers, which had not been sought by the Company; now, however, the Company saw its chance to obtain a monopoly of the fur trade between Mount St. Elias and California. To attain this end the Russian and American traders must be eliminated. Since the Russian American Company confined its activities chiefly to offshore islands and collected sea-otter skins and fur seals, while the Hudson's Bay Company collected land pelts, there was no need for immediate elimination of the Russians. It was principally against the American petty traders that the Hudson's Bay Company turned its efforts. The task was not too difficult since the Americans aided in their own elimination in as much as many had suffered ruin already and the rest made little profit. Once the Americans had been eliminated, the British Company would seek to do the same to the Russians.

Ironically similar plans were in the minds of the directors of the Russian American Company. Although it was true that their government had conceded the privilege of trading and navigating in Russian waters to both of their competitors, the directors hoped that after the ten-year period elapsed, the entire north

Pacific would become a *mare clausum* under the dominion of the Czar, and thus obtain what Russia originally had asserted in the ukase of 1821. Two incidents, one involving the United States, the other Great Britain, point out that this was Russia's ultimate intention.

On April 17, 1834 the ten-year clause granting the right to the United States to navigate and trade along the Russian waters expired. That very day trouble arose in Russian America. Two American traders, Captains Snow and Allen, were then in Sitka and openly told the Russians of their intentions of trading along the coast above 54° 40'. Baron Ferdinand Wrangell, the governor of the Russian American Company, prohibited them from such action, stating that the ten-year period had expired and thus the privilege was no longer open to American traders. Both captains refused to acquiesce in this prohibition and went ahead anyway. Thereupon Wrangell appealed to the State Department. Nevertheless, the United States countered that the article be renewed by a convention and suggested the terms. The Russian foreign ministry hesitated, however, stating that the interests of the Russian American Company would have to be respected, and that no reply could be given until its governor, Wrangell, returned to St. Petersburg. His arrival did not occur until the summer of 1836. A few months later another incident occurred. An American ship, the *Loriot*, under the command of Captain Blinn, was ordered by Russian warships to turn back to Forrester's Island. Blinn then returned to his starting-point in the Sandwich Islands and turned in a complaint,

declaring that he had a right to land on unoccupied territory by reason of Article I even though the ten years had expired. When Nesselrode was notified of this claim, his reply was that since Article I was conditioned by Article IV which limited the privileges to ten years, the Russian warships had not violated the agreement.[32]

To this assertion Dallas, the American minister at St. Petersburg, replied that, "By agreeing not to form new establishments north of latitude 54° 40', the United States made no acknowledgment of the right of Russia to the territory above that line. If such an admission had been made, Russia, . . . must have equally acknowledged the right of the United States to the territory south of the parallel." Conclusive proof that Russia did not so understand the article was evidenced by her having entered into a "similar agreement in her subsequent treaty of 1825, with Great Britain, and having, in that instrument, acknowledged the right of possession of the same territory by Great Britain."[33] A final settlement on this issue was not reached, although a few more notes were exchanged. Neither the Americans nor the British were willing to yield, thus raising a case of interpretation which was never resolved.

Yet a similar incident, this one involving Great Britain,

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[32] U. S. Congress, Senate, Senate Documents, No. 1, 25th Cong., 3rd Sess. (Washington, 1839), Nesselrode to Dallas, February 23, 1838, pp. 58-60.

[33] Ibid. Dallas to Nesselrode, March 5/17, 1838, pp. 64-65.

resulted in a definite agreement between the London and St. Petersburg governments. On June 18, 1834 the Dryad, under the command of Captain Kipling arrived at the mouth of the Stikine River. Chief Factor John McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company had been ordered by the governor and its committee to build a post up the Stikine River, whose harbor was in Russian territory. It was to be built about ten leagues up, in British territory. The ultimate purpose seems to have been twofold: 1) to eliminate the main source of most of the land furs, and 2) to establish superior competition with the Russian American Company especially by obtaining the furs from the interior Indians rather than buying them from the coastal Indians. Yet it was not the intention of the Hudson's Bay Company to destroy the Russian American Company, but only to establish for itself a monopoly south of Mount St. Elias.[34] Wrangell was suspicious even before the expedition in the Dryad arrived, and he had built a fort at the harbor so that the British would be forced to ask his permission to sail up the river according to the treaty of 1825 as he interpreted it. The Russian governor refused this permission to the British ship which was forced to return to Fort Vancouver. Chief Factor McLoughlin appealed to Pelly who in turn filed a protest in the Foreign Office. As a result the Company claimed a twenty-two thousand pound loss against the Russian American Company. When Nesselrode disclaimed Wrangell's action, the two companies met, and instead of presenting their petitions

[34]Galbraith, p. 148.

and grievances through their respective governments, they negotiated privately. Pelly and Simpson, overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, went to St. Petersburg, though the final agreement was reached in Hamburg, on February 6, 1839. Since each of the main points of agreement affect the future Russian policy in Russian America, and are one of the basic reasons for the United States buying the territory, it would be well to outline them.

For a period of ten years the Russian American Company leased to the Hudson's Bay Company from June 1, 1840 the coastal strip on the mainland north of Cape Spencer for an annual rent of two thousand seasoned land otter skins from the west side of the Rocky Mountains. The Russian American Company further promised that if war were to break out, a three month notice would be given to the British company to evacuate the territory. The Hudson's Bay Company, on the other hand, agreed to provide the Russians with food supplies for the period of the contract as well as to transport English manufactured goods which the Russians desired at the rate of thirteen pounds per ton. The British Company also withdrew its claims for losses incurred in the Dryad incident of 1834.[35] Within two decades the impact of this agreement would be felt on the Pacific Northwest.

From the above exposition it is clear that Russia's pretensions in the north Pacific were being closely checked by Great

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[35] Ibid. 154; cf. A. B. T., 209-212 for the full text.

Britain and the United States. To safeguard her interests and rights here Russia was forced to relinquish her laissez-faire policy and to adopt a policy of active interest in her possessions. Within twenty-five years after the formation of the Russian American Company, Russia had signed two treaties, one with the United States, the other with Great Britain. Although the St. Petersburg government afterwards tried to reaffirm the policy of a closed sea, Russia was unsuccessful, for the two powers with interests therein would not forego any claims which they had so far been able to establish.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIA'S CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS RUSSIAN AMERICA

As the loss of the Amur River Valley had forced Russia to change her foreign policy and expand northwards, so also the Crimean War forced the Russian government to realize that the colonies in North America were vulnerable to attack. In 1841 Sir George Simpson, the overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and Adolph Etholine, governor of the Russian American Company, conversed in Sitka about the absurdity of the two companies attacking each other in case of war. This was especially so since the war might be fought over issues extremely remote from the northwest coast. Hence Simpson suggested that each company exert its influence over its government to neutralize the northwest coast from the area of conflict.

This proposal, originally made in 1841, was adopted at the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854. The conversation of the two men had been transcribed, so that when the directors of the Russian American Company on February 14, 1854 wrote to London asking the Hudson's Bay Company to induce the British government to neutralize the northwest coast, they were able to cite the verbal understanding that had previously been arranged. On March 22, 1854

the Hudson's Bay Company, on the advice of the Foreign Office, agreed to the proposal of the Russian American Company with regard to land areas alone, and further cautioned that the English fleet maintained the right to capture any Russian ship in the North Pacific and to blockade the Russian American ports.

Even before the directors wrote to London, the first intimation of a proposed sale of Russian America was made. Fearing that Great Britain might seize the Russian colonies, P. S. Kostromitinov, the Vice-Consul of the Russian American Company in San Francisco, devised a fictitious sale of the colonies to the American Russian Commercial Company of San Francisco. On January 18/30, 1854 the contract in draft form was sent to Edward de Stoeckl, Russian minister in Washington, for approval. He, in turn, consulted William Marcy, Secretary of State, and Senator William Gwin of California. They advised Stoeckl that Great Britain would see through this ruse and would never respect it. These abortive negotiations were held prior to those between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Company and their representatives in London and St. Petersburg. When the neutrality agreement became known, the fictitious proposal of selling the colonies no longer was discussed.

Although the exact situation was not known, newspapers began to circulate rumors that Russia was willing to sell Russian America. By repeated efforts eventually they were able to convince a number of people of the truth of their assertions. Believing in these

rumors, Gwin and Marcy approached Stoeckl on the subject. The Russian minister had known of the reports, but affirming that they were certainly not true, he asked them to forget about it.[1]

An interesting light is cast on these inquiries by Stoeckl in a letter which he addressed to Prince Alexander Gorchakov, the Russian Foreign Secretary. To Stoeckl it did not seem strange that Great Britain should have acquiesced so readily to the neutrality agreement of 1854. The secret motive behind the British move was that the London government was aware of the rumor of Russia's intention to sell the colonies to the United States; and so, in order to prevent them from falling into American possession, Great Britain agreed. This information Stoeckl asserted he received from Marcy who assured him that "the English legation in Washington was on the alert to know whether there were really any question of the sale of our colonies to the Americans."[2]

Immediately upon the close of the Crimean War and the conclusion of the Peace of Paris, the problem of the future destiny of the Russian colonies once more arose. It was clear that if Russia would engage in war with a naval power, the colonies in North America were defenseless. Nor did St. Petersburg have the assurance that another neutrality agreement could be reached. Hence, the

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[1] Frank A. Golder, "The Purchase of Alaska," AHR, XXV (April 1920), 411-412.

[2] Stoeckl to Gorchakov, December 23, 1859/January 4, 1860, ed. and trans. Hallie M. McPherson, "The Projected Purchase of Alaska, 1859-1860," PHR, III (March 1934), 86.

problem had to be discussed and solved.

Since the colonies could not be protected sufficiently, the best solution seemed to be to sell them. This proposal was urged by Grand Duke Constantine Nicholaevich, brother of Czar Alexander II, in a letter dated December 7/19, 1856 to Prince Gorchakov. Suggesting that the colonies be sold to the United States, the Grand Duke contended that since the colonies were of little value to Russia, and since there was a great lack of money in the treasury, Russia could profit from the sale. Furthermore, the United States needed the territory to round out its holdings on the Pacific. Besides these proposals he also recommended that an inspection be made of the Company administration in Russian America so that the government could ascertain the extent to which the Company had been beneficial to the inhabitants, and also so that it might prepare a revision of the Company's charter.

Prince Gorchakov showed the note to the Czar and shortly thereafter in his reply to the Grand Duke agreed to the proposals, but emphasized that secrecy must be kept. He further suggested that Stoeckl should discreetly approach the State Department on this question of a possible sale, and that a commission be sent to Russian America before the expiration of the charter of the Company. No final decision would be made until the reports of Stoeckl and the commission had reached St. Petersburg.[3]

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[3]Victor J. Farrar, The Annexation of Russian America to the United States (Washington, 1937), pp. 4-5.

In a memorandum dated April 29/May 11, 1857, Gorchakov informed the Grand Duke that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared his idea of selling Russian America to the United States, but urged that the greatest secrecy be maintained so that this would not be detrimental to the Russian American Company. In addition Stoeckl was to be advised that the cession was to be limited to those lands which lay in North America, since the Aleutian and Kurile Islands could remain in the possession of Russia through the Russian American Company for its operations in Siberia. The sale should be made in a little over four years--when the charter would expire--and the purchase price should be 7,442,800 silver rubles, with the government and the Company equally dividing this amount.[4]

At some time during 1858-1859 Stoeckl was in Russia on vacation. During his interview with Gorchakov the Russian minister was instructed verbally that if the United States should make another move to purchase the territory the proposal should be considered seriously. By late 1859 such a move was made from an unexpected quarter. On December 23, 1859/January 4, 1860 Stoeckl reported to Gorchakov that Gwin had approached him recently on the proposal of buying Russian America and assured him that the President was ready to buy.[5] Basically Gwin argued that the colonies were so far from

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[4] Ibid. 6-7.

[5] Victor J. Farrar, "Joseph Lane McDonald and the Purchase of Alaska," WHQ, XII (April 1921), 84. For details of Gwin's relations with McDonald, a California entrepreneur, see below pp. 55-56.

Russia that the latter could never possibly exploit the resources of those colonies. The nearness of the United States would definitely be an advantage for such exploitation. Stoeckl replied evasively and stated that he did not know the views of his government and that he was limited to submitting the proposal to the Prince. Gwin in turn answered that he would again confer with President Buchanan and inform Stoeckl of the results.

Some time afterwards Gwin again called on Stoeckl and told him that the President agreed to the nonofficial character of the proceedings. Hence communications were not to be sent through the office of Secretary of State Cass, but only of Undersecretary Appleton. A few days later Stoeckl received a visit from the undersecretary who informed him that he had spoken to President Buchanan. Appleton reiterated Gwin's contentions and added that before taking further steps it was necessary to ascertain Russia's views on this proposal. If an affirmative reply would be made, Appleton promised Stoeckl that the President would consult with his Cabinet about the proposal and then set the conditions upon which the negotiations would be executed. Stoeckl answered Appleton by stating that Russia's answer, whatever it was, must not be considered as a proposition to sell the colonies, since the United States had initiated the idea of a possible purchase. To this Gwin and Appleton both agreed. Before the conference ended, Stoeckl casually asked about a possible purchase price. The offer made was five million dollars. Stoeckl then assured them that he would consult

Gorchakov about this matter and then tell them about the reply.[6]

The response of the Russian Foreign Secretary, however, was not so encouraging. Gorchakov, in a despatch that reached America in the summer of 1860, stated that the offer was not what might have been expected. The Russian government would reflect maturely on the proposal, but would not render a final decision until the Minister of Finance had finished his report on the financial condition of the colonies. Adding a personal note of his own, the Prince pointed out that alienating the Russian possessions would not prove beneficial to Russia politically, but that the only consideration which could turn the scales would be a financial advantage which certainly was not found in the American offer of five million dollars. Gorchakov concluded his remarks by asking Stoeckl to tell Gwin and Appleton that the sum offered was not considered to be "an equitable equivalent."[7]

Before further negotiations could be transacted, the North and South were fighting a civil war in the United States. World events so far had disclosed the fact that the United States had begun to play a significant part in the maintenance of a European balance of power with respect to European colonies. That Russia should

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[6]Stoeckl to Gorchakov, December 23, 1859/January 4, 1860, ed. McPherson, PHR, III, 84-85.

[7]U. S. Congress, House, House Executive Documents, Vol. 13, No. 177, "Message from the President of the United States . . . transmitting correspondence in relation to Russian America," 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington, 1868), pp. 133-134.

have sided with the North while Great Britain sided with the South was naturally expected as an effect of the chain of events that had occurred. Since Lincoln's proclamation of April 19, 1861 announcing the blockade of Southern ports seriously affected British shipping, Great Britain and France recognized the Confederate states as belligerents. This resulted in strained diplomatic relations between the two countries and the North. Russia, however, from the outset of the war supported the Union, especially since this would be another opportunity to weaken British maritime power. Stoeckl went as far as to berate the Southern leaders and even attempted to bring about a reconciliation between the opponents.[8] Gorchakov extended to Cassius Clay, the American minister at St. Petersburg, the assurance of Russian friendship, and supported this by granting American vessels the privilege of bringing prizes of war into Russian ports.[9] Russia's show of friendship seems to have been an important factor in avoiding British and French intervention.

Although Russia's position significantly restrained British maritime power, especially in the outbreak of the war, Czar Alexander II, nonetheless, was left with no other alternative. Similar

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[8] Frank A. Golder, "The American Civil War through the Eyes of a Russian Diplomat," AHR, XXVI (April 1921), 454-463.

[9] MS. Despatches, Russia, XVIII, April 8/21, 1861, State Department, quoted in Benjamin P. Thomas, Russo-American Relations, 1815-1867, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Vol. XLVIII (Baltimore, 1930), p. 126.

problems faced Russia and the United States. As the North heard the Southern cries of secession and the bombardment of Fort Sumter, Russian Poland was also undergoing tempestuous times in their struggle for independence from the autocratic Czar. This movement was encouraged by Great Britain and France, since both states had granted Russian Poland some autonomy in the Congress of Vienna in 1815. But Russia countered that the affair was entirely domestic. Hence Russia could not have allied herself to Great Britain and France on the side of the South when across the globe the Czarist government found itself in serious opposition to them.

Since Russia had been so cooperative toward the North, Secretary of State William H. Seward reciprocated in May, 1863 by refusing to participate in a proposed French intervention with Great Britain to check Czar Alexander in the Polish Rebellion.[10] Also coupled to the Polish question was the visit of the Russian fleet to the United States in the fall of 1863, for in September part of the fleet appeared in New York harbor and a month later another part appeared in San Francisco harbor. Throughout the North wild applause greeted the arrival of these two fleets. The popular belief was that the Russians had come to assist the North in case the Union were attacked by France or Great Britain. Some citizens asserted that some agreement actually existed between the two governments. Another legend then circulating was that the

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[10] Harold E. Blinn, "Seward and the Polish Rebellion of 1863," AHR, XLV (July 1940), 828-833.

fleet was sent to this country with "secret orders" that in case of European intervention the fleet would be placed at the disposal of the Union. Such rumors have since been proved entirely groundless.[11]

The facts are that when the Polish controversy had reached a critical stage in the summer of 1863, Alexander II was determined not to yield. By skilful maneuvering he ordered the fleet out of the Russian ports where, if war broke out, it might be trapped either by British ships or by ice. If the Russian ships were in friendly ports or on the high seas, they would be more able to inflict damage on British shipping. In fact when the Russian fleets arrived in the United States the possibility of European intervention really had subsided.[12] Consequently Russian policy during the American Civil War was one of self-interest which asserted that a United States strong and undivided must act as a balance against British power.

After the surrender of the Confederate States at Appomattox Courthouse in April, 1865 the restored Union now faced the overwhelming problems of reconstruction. While these domestic issues were being solved, Seward was also busy in international affairs.

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[11] Frank A. Golder, "The Russian Fleet and the American Civil War," AHR, XX(July 1915), 807-808. Another study, carried on without cognizance of Golder's work, is E. A. Adamov, "Russia and the United States at the Time of the Civil War," Journal of Modern History, II(December 1930), 586-602. The entire question has been scrutinized again in Thomas A. Bailey, "The Russian Fleet Myth Reexamined," MVHR, XXXVIII (June 1951), 81-90.

[12] Thomas, p. 139.

Besides his growing interest in the Far East Seward was trying to settle the Alabama claims. Although this problem was not adjudicated until 1870 by the Treaty of Washington and the subsequent Geneva Arbitration Awards, the Secretary of State kept insisting upon America's claims against Great Britain. He was not willing to let the British Foreign Office forget the depredations of the Alabama and other Confederate cruisers.

While this topic was occupying his mind, Seward was shortly presented with a newer problem by Stoeckl, the Russian minister. In the winter of 1866-1867 Stoeckl returned to St. Petersburg on a leave of absence seemingly with the purpose of relinquishing his post and of getting another diplomatic assignment at the Hague. Since he had played an intimate part in some preliminary negotiations for the sale of the Russian colonies, the government called upon him to sit in the deliberations of a committee called to decide the future of these possessions. By now the Russian American Company was drifting towards bankruptcy so that without an annual government subsidy of two hundred thousand rubles the directors could not possibly succeed in governing the territory. At the committee meeting held on December 16/28, 1866 Czar Alexander II presided. In attendance were Prince Gorchakov, Grand Duke Constantine, Vice-Admiral Krabbe, Minister of the Marine, and Stoeckl. The final decision of the group was that the colonies should be sold. The Czar turned to Stoeckl and asked him to go to Washington

to conclude the deal. Not having much choice in the matter, the Russian minister acquiesced.

In February, 1867 Stoeckl arrived in New York City. It was not until mid-March, however, that he reached Washington. When he called upon Seward, he broached the matter delicately. Although there is no official account of the meeting, it seems that Stoeckl opened the conversation by stating his regrets that he could not grant the concessions asked for by Cassius Clay, the American minister at St. Petersburg, on behalf of certain Californians. Seward then told Stoeckl that he also had a favor to ask on behalf of some citizens in Washington Territory who had petitioned for fisheries rights.[13] To this Stoeckl replied that the Russian government could not possibly grant it. Seward countered by asking outright if Russia were willing to sell Russian America to the United States. At last the Russian minister had gained his objective of having the initiative for the purchase come from the United States. President Andrew Johnson was then approached by Seward who a few days later again met with Stoeckl and told him that the President was willing to pay five million dollars. This was not agreeable to Stoeckl since he had been instructed to get at least six million, five hundred thousand dollars.

Some controversy over the terms then took place. By March 25

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[13]The interest of Cassius M. Clay and some citizens of the Washington Territory in the purchase will be examined in the following chapter.

Stoeckl was able to inform the Czar by cable that the United States had raised its offer to seven million dollars, provided that the sale would not be burdened by any reservations or privileges granted by the Russian American Company or Russia itself. Furthermore Seward had insisted that the payment should be made in New York and not in London and also agreed to add two hundred thousand dollars to the purchase price if Stoeckl would agree to this proposal.[14] The Russian minister was amenable to this offer, but he had not yet received his powers as plenipotentiary. Seward urged Stoeckl to obtain these powers by cable so that the treaty could be submitted to the Senate which soon would be adjourning.

Late in the evening of March 29, Stoeckl received the necessary authority as he and the Secretary of State were spending the evening informally. Not willing to wait until morning office hours, they summoned their aides and drew up the treaty of cession. By 4 A. M. the treaty was finished. The proceedings were reported to St. Petersburg by cable and a summary of the treaty was transcribed over the wires. The very next day the treaty was presented to Senator Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Seward was not going to waste a moment. By April 9, within ten days of the signing of the agreement, the Senate ratified the treaty by a vote of thirty-seven to two. On May 10 the treaty

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[14] U. S. Congress, House, House Executive Documents, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs: Diplomatic Correspondence, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington, 1868), Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, p.399.

was ratified by Czar Alexander II. Thus another outstanding real estate transaction in world history was accomplished for the price of two cents per acre.

During this period the familiar phrases: "Seward's icebox," "Walrussia," "Johnson's polar garden," and others were being broadcast through some of the newspapers.[15] Although at the beginning the treaty met opposition both from some of the general public and even from the Senate, it is curious to note a remark made by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. A staunch opponent of Seward, even though both served on the same Cabinet, Welles comments in his Diary on Friday, March 15, "Seward produced a treaty for acquiring the Russian possessions in North America. All assented to submitting it to the Senate." Four days later he stated, "Had the Russian treaty on the tapis. No division of opinion as to the measure."[16] In both instances Welles records that there was no dissension in the Cabinet about the proposed purchase. This is quite remarkable in the light of the opposition later voiced against Seward's other schemes for expansion.

In brief then, Russia began to change her attitude towards

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[15]New York Herald, April 12, 1867, quoted in Thomas A. Bailey, "Why the United States Purchased Alaska," PHR, III (March 1934), p. 42. The article is a study of the opposition of the press.

[16]Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson, ed. Howard K. Beale (New York, 1960), III, 66; 68.

Russian America as a result of the Crimean War. Because there was threat of bankruptcy in the Russian American Company and because the colonies were becoming defenseless against an attacker, Russia sold Russian America to the United States.

CHAPTER IV

BANKS' FIRST FOUR REASONS EXAMINED

Up to this point the background of the purchase has been examined in detail. To some extent Russia's Far Eastern policy as it affected Russian America has also been studied. The conflicts of the United States, Great Britain, and Russia in the north Pacific area have been reviewed. This was followed by the solution on Russia's part through eventual sale of Russian America to the United States. Yet why did the United States purchase the territory? This question cannot be answered as readily.

Before attempting to study the reasons offered for the purchase, it seems proper to discuss the historical framework in which this new territorial acquisition occurred. Was there any settlement for expansion after the Civil War? To anyone who for the first time realizes the fact that the United States purchased territory so soon after the Civil War, it must seem strange that such an amount of money could be made available towards such a purchase. This is especially true when it is noted that economic distress usually is a concomitant result of war.

In the years following the Civil War a number of attempts were made to effect annexation of noncontiguous territories to the

United States. The Republican Party, the dominating force in the post Civil War period, was traditionally anti-expansionist. A partial reason for this position was the struggle over the slavery question that had raged before the war, for newly acquired territories might mean new states either the slave or anti-slave states. Lest the equilibrium be disturbed, expansion became a dormant issue. After the war some political figures attempted to revive the issue but with only a modicum of success, for, burdened with a tremendous debt, and struggling with the problems of a possible depression, the nation was scarcely willing to spend enormous sums on projects of expansion that would inevitably add to the existing problems.

One trace of expansionist sentiment is found, nonetheless, immediately upon the termination of the Civil War. This was the belief expressed in many newspapers that Canada should be annexed to the United States. In South Carolina the Charlestion Daily Courier predicted that, "The day may not be far distant when Canada shall form one of the Commonwealths of this great Republic."[1] Other papers joined in this sentiment; for instance, the Chicago Tribune, the Cincinnati Daily Commercial, the New York Times, the New York Tribune, and the Boston Sunday Times.[2] When the British Parliament

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[1] July 29, 1865, "Canada and Annexation," quoted in Donald M. Dozer, "Anti-Expansionism During the Johnson Administration," PHR, XII (June 1943), 255.

[2] Ibid. 255, n. 11.

passed the British North America Act in March, 1867 by which the Canadian provinces were consolidated for the purpose of administration, an outcry was raised by the press. On the thirtieth day of the same month, Seward was able to announce to the press the signing of the treaty of the acquisition of Alaska. In doing so the Secretary of State capitalized on the Canadian annexation sentiment by declaring that annexing Alaska would mean the eventual annexing of Canada.[3]

Although Seward's prophecy never materialized, the purchase of Alaska did result in an outburst of expansionist sentiment by the American public. The doctrine of "manifest destiny" was now revived and the press took up the battle cry. Some of the editors foretold that the Speaker of the House of Representatives would soon be calling upon members from Cuba, Mexico, Jamaica, Quebec, and others to serve on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.[4] Such boasting, however, did not accomplish anything, for of all the territories Seward sought to obtain, including the Danish West Indies, the island of San Domingo, and Samana Bay, the only purchase that was approved was that of Alaska. Hence, even though a burst of expansionist sentiment had been aroused by the purchase of Alaska, at the same time a clamor against Johnson and his ministers was

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[3] Cf. James M. Callahan, Americo-Canadian Relations Concerning Annexation, 1849-1871, Indiana University Studies in American History, Vol. XII (Bloomington, 1925), pp. 199-202.

[4] Dozer, PHR, XII, 261-262.

also raised to defeat any attempts at further territorial gains.

Although the Senate ratified the treaty on April 9, 1867 and the territory had been handed over to the United States in October, the House of Representatives did not pass the appropriation measure until July of the following year. During this period the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Nathaniel P. Banks, was called upon to express his opinion on the proposed appropriation for the purchase. In the report favoring the bill before the committee, he stated:

> The mystery which was supposed to attend this cession has been dispelled, and the motives of the parties presenting it to the government have been satisfactorily explained. They were, first, the laudable desire of citizens of the Pacific coast to share in the prolific fisheries of the oceans, seas, bays, and rivers of the western world; the refusal of Russia to renew the charter of the Russian American Fur Company in 1866; the friendship of Russia for the United States; the necessity of preventing the transfer, by any possible chance of the northwest coast of America to an unfriendly power; the creation of new industrial interests on the Pacific necessary to the supremacy of our empire on the sea and land; and, finally, to facilitate and secure the advantages of an unlimited American commerce with the friendly powers of Japan and China.[5]

Although Banks affirms that the motives have been "satisfactorily explained," conflicting opinions have been offered since then. In order to solve this problem of motivation it would be well to study each of these reasons separately. Only then can some conclusions be drawn.

The first reason as stated by Banks is "the desire of citizens

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[5] House Report, No. 37, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 11.

of the Pacific coast to share in the prolific fisheries of the oceans, seas, bays, and rivers of the western world." This reason is rejected by Henry W. Clark in his History of Alaska by his statement that the Washington memorial for fishery privileges was the work of an isolated crank and the fur privileges were the work of a company of exploiters.[6] Upon careful examination, however, he seems to have overlooked certain points. Banks does not claim that the whole Pacific coast was asking for such privileges, but affirms that "citizens of the Pacific coast" were. In order to ascertain the identity of the citizens that Banks had in mind it will be necessary to recall the beginnings of the purchase movement.

An Irish immigrant, Joseph Lane McDonald emigrated to the United States about 1834 and eventually went to California in 1859. His primary purpose seems to have been to establish a fishery business, but as the California waters offered no financially sound prospect, he turned his attention to the waters off Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. Here he found that Americans were no longer permitted to make landings on Russian possessions since Article IV of the treaty of 1824 had expired. In the fall of 1859 he returned to San Francisco where he formed a company which would have access to the peninsula of Alaska. It is certain that he did not intend to ask for the purchase of Alaska, but only sought to

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[6] Clark, p. 79.

obtain from the governor of the Russian American Company the required permission to sail in the waters in and near Russian America. When this was denied to him, McDonald turned to Secretary of State Cass who replied that it was more important to settle the internal difficulties in the South before any other matters. After this failure to obtain support, McDonald went to Senator Gwin of California, who, as we have seen, approached Stoeckl about the matter in 1854. Now five years later the Senator was again bringing up the issue.[7] Gwin, it will be recalled, had procured the assistance of Assistant Secretary of State Appleton. Both of them had approached Stoeckl with the proposition of buying the Russian colonies. In addition to Stoeckl's letter to Gorchakov, dated December 23, 1859/January 4, 1860, Senator Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in his speech of April 9, 1867, reiterated that Gwin and Appleton had so acted with Stoeckl.[8] Though there are no records of these abortive propositions of sale, there are however two witnesses, one from the United States, the other from Russia, both of whom agree about this attempted purchase. Besides, the reason why Gwin approached Stoeckl in the first place is now clear. Neither in the speech of Sumner nor in the letter of Stoeckl was the purpose of Gwin's action made clear.

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[7] Farrar, WHQ, XII, 83-84.

[8] Charles Sumner, The Works of Charles Sumner (Boston, 1883), XI, 188.

In the post-Civil War period McDonald saw his chance for establishing a railroad and steamship company which would connect Europe and Asia by a link through America. In order to achieve this goal he proposed to erect the Puget Sound Steam Navigation Company which would have to be incorporated by the Territory of Washington. Even though the advertisements in the newspapers appear somewhat bizarre, many reputable businessmen subscribed to his scheme. The legislature readily passed the bill for incorporation of the company, but they could not extend him any permission to navigate in Russian waters. McDonald was advised to send a memorial on the subject to President Johnson in the name of the legislature. This memorial, received in February, 1866, read in part: "Your memorialists respectfully request your Excellency to obtain such rights and privileges of the government of Russia, as will enable our fishing vessels to visit the harbors of its possessions to the end that fuel, water and provisions may be easily obtained . . ."[9] As far as can be ascertained no answer was given to McDonald's request. Not until the following year is there a reference in the government public documents when Seward, upon request, informally submitted to the chairman of the Senate committee some notes on Alaska. In his prefatory remarks, Seward states, "The memorial of the legislature of Washington Territory to the President, received in February, 1866, was made an occasion, in general

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[9] House Executive Documents, No. 177, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. p. 4.

terms, for communicating to Mr. de Stoeckl the importance of some early and comprehensive arrangement between the two countries, to prevent the growth of difficulties arising out of the fisheries in the Russian possessions."[10]

Yet some questions arise concerning this statement. Although received in February, 1866, the memorial was not made "the occasion" until eleven months had elapsed. If, as has been stated before, Seward apparently approached Stoeckl with the request on behalf of the Washington citizens so that Stoeckl could gain his objective of having the United States make an offer to purchase the territory, why did Seward wait so long? What had taken place in the intervening months? To say, as Clark did, that this memorial was the work of an isolated crank might be true only in the sense that he was its chief proponent. But it does not show how or why the Legislature of the Washington Territory should approve such a "crank's" move; it does not explain why a legislative assembly could have been persuaded to act.[11] Furthermore, this statement does not try to explain Seward's delayed action upon this petition. Did he think it to be the work of a crank? In a certain sense it seems irrelevant whether he did or not, for he used the memorial only as a "cause," an "occasion," an "opportunity" to broach the subject to the Russian minister.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid. 133.

In connection with the memorial of the Washington Territory Clark said that the petition for fur privileges was the work of a company of exploiters. To determine the correctness of this statement, an examination of the background of this group will be necessary.

By an agreement in 1839 the Hudson's Bay Company had received from the Russian American Company a grant of leased land, commonly known as "the panhandle." This agreement was renewed every ten years until 1859 when the Russian American Company leased the land to 1862 and then to 1867. In 1866, however, the charter of the Russian American Company was soon to expire. The complications arising from both of these future expirations are connected with Louis Goldstone and Cornelius Cole, later Senator from California.

In 1865 Louis Goldstone of British Columbia had heard that the lease of the Hudson's Bay Company of the panhandle would expire in June, 1867, and that the Russian American Company would prefer to lease the area to an American Company. Upon his return to San Francisco he induced a number of outstanding leaders of the state to join him in the enterprise of establishing what was later incorporated as the California Fur Company; and to obtain the required lease, Cornelius Cole was engaged. In a letter to Cole dated April 10, 1866 the California Fur Company maintained that the present was very opportune for organizing a trading company to trade between the Russian colonies and the United States, for the charter granted to the Hudson's Bay Company would soon

expire. By promising five per cent of the gross proceeds of its transactions, and by employing missionaries to ameliorate the conditions of the Indians, the company surmised that it could readily obtain such an agreement from Russia.[12] Cole felt that he should negotiate with Stoeckl directly, he traveled to Washington to see him. The company was informed that Stoeckl had acquiesced in these demands, but that no final decision would be made until the actual expiration of the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Such a stalemate in the negotiations did not satisfy Cole, so he wrote to Cassius M. Clay, the American minister at St. Petersburg, who was asked to sound out the Russian government or the Russian American Company on the position they would take towards such a proposal. Clay's reply of December 22, 1866 was that the government refused to interfere with the matters of the Company, but that Cole ought to deal with the Company directly. Six days before this letter was addressed, however, the Russian government had decided already to sell its possessions in North America. Thus when Stoeckl came to the United States in the following year, 1867, he used this refusal to the Goldstone-Cole Company as the beginning of his talks with Seward on the proposed purchase.[13]

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[12] Cf. Cornelius Cole, Memoirs of Cornelius Cole Ex-Senator of the United States from California (New York, 1908), pp. 281-285; Victor J. Farrar, "Senator Cole and the Purchase of Alaska," WHQ, XIV (October 1927), 243-247.

[13] Golder, AHR, XXV, 419.

The Secretary of State never seems to have favored the interests of the California group, perhaps because he felt that it would give another party credit for the purchase.

So far, the first reason for the purchase has been examined. It seems certain that although the Washington memorial may be considered the work of a "crank," it was still used as an occasion to broach the subject. Furthermore, even though Clark may call the desire for fur privileges by the California Fur Company the work of a group of "exploiters," this does not appear to negate the desire in the first place.[14] The main question here is to discover whether or not this desire was used as a reason for the purchase. From the evidence presented it seems that the desire was a reason, even though an indirect one.

Our attention is now turned to the second reason for the purchase, namely, the refusal of Russia to renew the charter of the Russian American Company, which Clark again rejects by stating that this reason does not affect the United States.[15] But can such a general statement stand? Is this to say that the United States' purchase on the one hand and Russia's willingness to sell because of this refusal had no connection? To answer these questions the refusal for a renewal of the charter must be placed in

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[14] Clark, p. 79.

[15] Ibid.

the light of Russian foreign policy. Once this is understood, how the refusal affected the United States can then be realized.

To clarify the problem the policy of Russia in the Far East before 1840 must be investigated. For over a century and a half Russia could justifiably boast that it had been the only European nation able to transact official diplomatic negotiations and to carry on trade relations with the Chinese Empire. Although it is true that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Russian Foreign Office was burdened with problems of European politics, every Governor-General of Eastern Siberia had been suggesting some methods of reconquering the Amur River Valley for Russia. What Russia needed most was at least one ice-free port on the Pacific Ocean which could act as a key to Russian trade relations. In 1828 an investigation of the region was ordered, and two years later a secret mission was sent for that purpose. Not until 1842, however, did Russia open its eyes to the events in Asia, for Great Britain had broken the coveted position of trading with China.

By the Treaty of Nanking which ended the Anglo-Chinese War, (1839-1842) Great Britain obtained the important city of Hong Kong. To Russia the effects were even greater, for the war showed them the utter corruption of the Ching Empire, which led to the anti-dynastic movement that culminated in the Taiping Rebellion, and the advent of other European powers in Eastern Asia. Thus the nature of international politics was changing in the Far East, and

for Russia in the Amur River region especially.

Lest this coveted region be seized by some unfriendly power, Czar Nicholas I in September, 1847 appointed Count Nicholas Muraviev Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. His instructions were to carry on trade and gold mining with China through Kiakhta, but secretly he was to direct his advance toward the Amur-Russian frontier. In 1852 a Russian squadron began a reconnaissance mission at the mouth of the river. When the Crimean War broke out in Europe the following November, the governor-general was told the defense of the Russian possessions was a military need. Hence no longer heeding the Chinese, Muraviev advanced down the Amur River in April, 1854. By this action he repudiated the Treaty of Nerchinsk which had stipulated China's exclusive sovereignty over the area. This problem was not settled until four years later by the Treaty of Aigun, by which the Russians were given the exclusive right with the Chinese to the navigation of the Amur, Sungari, and the Ussuri Rivers.[16]

While these events were occurring, Russian statesmen were becoming cognizant of the moves Russia ought to make in the Pacific. Muraviev had suggested as early as 1853 that Russia should sell its colonies to the United States, for just as it was inevitable that America would extend its domain to the Pacific Northwest, so

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[16] Cf. Selected Documents: Far Eastern International Relations, 1689-1951, ed. John M. Maki (Seattle, 1951), p. 6.

was it also inevitable for Russia to dominate the whole Pacific coast of Asia. He further commented that although the government had made the mistake of letting England gain a foothold in Asia, the error could be rectified by a close alliance with the United States.[17]

From the other side of the globe, Stoeckl too was urging the Russian Foreign Office to sell the colonies lest they become a source of conflict with America. This is the tone of his letter in which he urged upon the Russian Foreign Secretary, Gorchakov, that Russia should turn her attention to the Asiatic coasts and especially in the Amur River region.[18] Thus the Russian Foreign Office was forced to consider the advisability of retaining the colonies in America on the one hand, and of increasing Russia's penetration into Asiatic affairs on the other.

By 1866, however, a study of the economic reports was enough to shape that decision in the light of Russia's new Far Eastern policy. Between 1865-1866 the exportation and importation together between Russia and Asia had risen by more than five million rubles. Of this amount nearly four million rubles were in exports. Computing the commercial figures of the ten years preceding 1866 the total showed an aggregate increase of sixty-six per cent. This

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[17] Muraviev to the Emperor, quoted in Tompkins, Alaska, p. 174.

[18] Stoeckl to Gorchakov, December 23, 1859/January 4, 1860, PHR, III, 86.

increase of Asiatic trade was sharply contrasted to a decrease of trade with the American colonies.[19] By 1866 the total income of the Russian American Company amounted to 706,188 rubles, of which 200,000 was a treasury subsidy. Left for dividends were 10,828 rubles or 1.45 rubles per 150-ruble share which actually sold on the stock exchange at the price of seventy rubles. Even the cancellation of the taxes owed to the government and a subsidy from the government would not suffice to keep the group from bankruptcy.[20] Hence the decision was made in December, 1866 to sell the colonies and to refuse another charter to the Russian American Company.

How this refusal affects the United States now becomes clearer. The Crimean War directly evidenced Anglo-Russian rivalry; this in turn had been indirectly caused by the Anglo-Chinese War, for Russia had seen another European nation gain domination over Chinese territory. If then the Anglo-Russian rivalry is coupled with Russia's refusal to renew the charter it becomes apparent how each affected the other, for, since Russia had been engaged with Great Britain in the Crimean War which resulted in her colonies being placed in a defenseless position, the government began to think of selling the colonies. When this happened, it was to the

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[19] Clay to Seward, April 17, 1868, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, pp. 469-470.

[20] Okun, p. 250.

United States that Russia turned, for the Russian government would not want to sell its possessions to Great Britain who was already an opponent in the Far East. Thus the simple act of refusal to renew the charter in itself would not affect the United States, but when that refusal is placed in the context of Russia's position in the Far East that refusal affected the United States.

In continuance of the main purpose of this chapter, the third reason for the purchase, namely, the friendship of Russia for the United States, can now be studied. Of all the reasons that will be investigated perhaps this one has received more comment and criticism than any other, as will be clearly seen in the discussion.

Before embarking on a consideration of the friendship of these two countries, perhaps it would be wise to analyze some basic concepts. This analysis will be twofold; that is, what friendship is in itself, and how friendship differs between people on the one hand and nations on the other. It is hoped that these distinctions will result in a separation of some misguided notions from the real ones.

To define friendship is not a simple task. But for all practical purposes it can be defined as the state of two parties who show esteem and respect for each other. Friendship between two individuals can be one of the highest bonds that join men together. But among nations friendship is not the same, for here friendship depends on the statesmen who govern, with the people usually following their leaders' wishes. As Pauline Tompkins has stated,

". . . friendship among nations is determined less by state of mind than by state of events; less by sentiment than by experience."[21]

An exceedingly clear insight into this problem was aptly summarized by Seward in a despatch to Cassius Clay. On May 6, 1861, a few months after he had been in office, the Secretary of State affirmed that nations and individuals were alike in having three prominent wants, namely, freedom, prosperity, and friends. He added that the United States had been fortunate in procuring the first two, but that she had been slow in winning friends, with the exception of Russia. He asserted that Russia had been and still was a constant friend. This was somewhat obvious, for the two nations have never come into rivalry or conflict; but once the two had made "a circuit of half the globe in opposite directions, then they shall meet and greet each other in the region where civilization first began. . ."[22] It was Clay's task to strengthen and keep those bonds of friendship.

If then there has been a tradition of friendship between the United States and Russia in the nineteenth century, some manifestations of it can be noticed. Notwithstanding the fact that there are numerous instances that could be offered as evidence, three perhaps must suffice: the Crimean War, the Civil War, and the

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[21] Pauline Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East (New York, 1949), p. 4.

[22] William H. Seward, The Works of William H. Seward, ed. George E. Baker, New Edition (Boston, 1884), V, 246.

admission of Russian ships in San Francisco.

During the Crimean War Russia sought to cultivate the friendship of the United States, and in fact this war helped this union. The majority of the American people felt friendly towards Russia and the government in turn performed many acts of friendship. Furthermore the Russian government was pleased when the United States "forced" Great Britain to accept the principle that free ships make free goods--a principle that had been disputed in the Anglo-American War of 1812. Then too, after the war Russia assured the United States that although it had signed the Declaration of Paris by which it agreed to abolish privateering, that point would not be binding between Russia and the United States. This was again promised at the outbreak of the Civil War.[23]

Since Russia's favoring of the North in the Civil War has already been mentioned in the background of the purchase, it will not be reviewed in detail again. It will be remembered, however, that the United States reciprocated as well by not interfering in the Polish quesion. There were practical reasons for these moves, for Russia always wanted to break the maritime power of Great Britain and saw her chance in supporting the North. Besides the United States was certainly too weak to do anything about the Polish question even if it so desired. Seward was not willing to interfere in European politics and was thus carrying out the Monroe Doctrine.

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[23] Thomas, p. 120.

The third instance of friendly relations between Russia and the United States is recorded in a letter of Stoeckl to Gorchakov. In it he recounts some of the difficulties that the Americans had encountered with the Russians in Alaska. Once the treaty of 1824 had expired, the Russians would not allow the Americans to trade in any of her colonial possessions in North America. After some insistence, however, the Russians yielded by opening the port of Sitka to trading. But as Stoeckl pointed out this concession was "illusory, because the Americans were able neither to bring and sell their merchandise, nor to buy the products of our colonies." What the Americans were demanding was strict reciprocity, since they had let the Russians not only trade in San Francisco but also allowed them to establish some settlements.[24] Actually by the same convention of 1824 the Americans also had the right to keep the Russians out of their area, but they chose not to do so. This was another instance of American goodwill towards Russia before the purchase.

But what was the basis of this friendship? Apparently it was that Great Britain had been antagonistic to the United States since the inception of the new Republic. Though there had been some instances of treaties signed between the countries, there had also been many instances of hard feelings against the British government. Similarly Russia found that England sought to gain control of the

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[24] Stoeckl to Gorchakov, July 12/24, 1867, AHR, XLVIII, 528-529.

Mediterranean Sea and even of the Baltic Sea. Because of the rise of liberal ideas in Great Britain and France in the early nineteenth century, these countries felt a closer relationship between one another than with autocratic Russia. Since the United States was not that closely knit with Great Britain, and since the latter could be stopped only with the help of another power, Russia sought to cultivate the friendship of the United States at all costs. As events in the later part of the century proved, such a foundation proved to be shallow, for by then Anglo-American interests began to coincide more readily than Russo-American interests.[25]

In commenting on this reason for the purchase, Clark states that this friendship has been "over-emphasized" and that Professor Golder says that there is "nothing in Russian archives to show that this affected either state department in the negotiation" for the purchase.[26] The validity of this statement can be upheld. Nonetheless the tradition of Russo-American friendship played its role in the purchase, not as a cause or reason, but an excellent atmosphere in which to transact the negotiations.

The fourth reason for the purchase is "the necessity of preventing the transfer of the territory to an unfriendly power." Again there has been some confusion on this point. Because Clark

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[25] P. Tompkins, p. 14.

[26] Clark, p. 79; also cf. Golder, AHR, XXV, 425.

has attributed the reasons that are under discussion to Senator Summer instead of to Representative Banks, seemingly he has been mistaken in saying that the fourth reason was the "necessity of preventing England from getting it." Indeed this would identify England as an "unfriendly power." Clark then adds that England was afraid to offend the United States as shown by the way she accepted the affronts of the Senate with regard to the Alabama claims. Besides the armed truce in Europe because of Bismarck's tactics, England realized the antagonism she had aroused in the United States when she could not afford to risk a war with us.[27] But the problem is whether the United States considered England an unfriendly power into whose hands Alaska might fall. Its solution can be discovered in an analysis of the background of Anglo-American relations.

In the middle of the nineteenth century England began to realize that the United States would dominate every part of the North American continent. Although the United States was having some difficulties with Great Britain over Cuba and at the same time had cast a rapacious eye on the Sandwich Islands, Great Britain was then contemplating joining France in declaring the neutrality of these two islands. This was a warning of John F. Crampton, British minister at Washington, to the fourth Earl of Clarendon,

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[27] Ibid.

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.[28] And yet coupled with America's determination to occupy this continent was her equal determination not to intervene in the Crimean War in which England and Russia were opponents.

During the Civil War, Anglo-American relations, though sometimes strained, generally remained amicable. True at the beginning of the war Seward had contemplated the establishment of a foreign policy that would so arouse the spirit of independence within America against European intervention that the Union would be saved against the common foe. Lincoln's sagacity, however, rejected such a proposal. But within a few months the Secretary of State had adopted a policy of caution in foreign affairs--a tribute to his statesmanship.[29] This is not to say, however, that later events in the war did not arouse a spirit of animosity against Great Britain, that spirit was usually limited to the people and to the press. The Trent Affair and the depredations of the Alabama were crucial instances of possible rupture in Anglo-American relations, but both were settled in a peaceful manner.

At the close of the war friction had given way to more

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[28] Crampton to Clarendon, February 7, 1853, ed. Richard W. Van Alstyne, "Anglo-American Relations, 1853-1857," AHR, XLII (April 1937), 494.

[29] H. C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952 (London, 1954), p. 461.

pacific relations. Two possible points of disagreement still existed. The Alabama claims of the United States were being discussed between the Department of State and the Court of St. James, until the final settlement in the Geneva Arbitration Awards. The other point of contention was not so easily disposed of, for it involved the annexationist sentiments of the Americans for Canada. In the minds of those who sought to revive the "manifest destiny" of the early part of that century, Canada would eventually become part of the United States. In 1866 a bill introduced into the House of Representatives sought to admit the northern neighbor into the Union. Moreover, in the earlier part of the year the Fenian movement put a strain on Americo-Canadian relations. But the Canadian government had won support to the cause of Confederation so that when the British government consolidated the eastern portion of the country into the Dominion of Canada in 1867, America had been repulsed. Hence by the time of the purchase of Alaska Anglo-American relations had become more amicable.

Within this framework it is interesting to note the reactions of English officials to the purchase, for this will give some indication of England's attitude. On April 1, 1867 the British government learned that the transaction between Russia and the United States had taken place. Lord Stanley, British Foreign Secretary, immediately notified Sir Andrew Buchanan, British minister at St. Petersburg to get the details from the Russian Foreign Office. Gorchakov's reply summarized the economic reasons for Russia's

willingness to sell the colonies, but disclaimed that the move had any political significance. To this statement, however, Sir Andrew replied that "it might have been considered a friendly act on the part of the Russian government if she had afforded Her Majesty's Government or the Government of Canada, an opportunity of purchasing the territory which had been sold, but that their not having done so was materially unimportant as I felt assured it would not have been bought." To this Lord Stanley cursorily remarked that "Her Majesty's Government approve [sic] the language you held in your conversation with Prince Gorchakov."[30]

In the British House of Lords, on April 2, 1867, the Duke of Buckingham, in reply to a question raised by the Earl of Clarendon concerning the cession of Alaska, stated that although he was not aware of the full progress of the negotiations for the cession, the transaction might cause "great feeling and possibly considerable excitement." Yet he felt that it would not be allowed to have "undue weight in the minds of Englishmen," because the cession would not have such an "overwhelming influence upon the progress of the colonies sprung from English blood" as at first glance

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[30] Hudson's Bay Company. Certain Correspondence of the Foreign Office and of the Hudson's Bay Company copied from the original documents, London, 1898, by Otto J. Klotz [sic] Dispatch from Sir Andrew Buchanan, St. Petersburg, to Lord Stanley, April 4, 1867. Draft (of a dispatch) from the Foreign Office, April 16, 1867, to Sir Andrew Buchanan, quoted in Tompkins, p. 189.

would be imagined.[31] This remark remained unchallenged.

On this side of the Atlantic Seward showed that he was clearly not antagonistic to Great Briatin. In a confidential despatch dated March 28, 1867--two days before the treaty of cession was signed--the Secretary of State wrote to Charles Francis Adams, the American minister in London, that the United States could not accept the proposal of arbitration in the form offered by Lord Stanley concerning the Alabama claims. He then added: "While writing this I am not to be understood as insisting that my views in regard to the situation in Great Britain are altogether correct. I may, indeed, entirely misunderstand the situation there. Nor am I unmindful of the critical nature of the political debates which are now occupying the attention of her Majesty's ministers. It is not the President's desire to do anything which would be or even seem to be unfriendly to Great Britain."[32] Hence the attitude of Seward was not anti-British.

In the Senate Charles Sumner, who had become the staunchest supporter of the treaty of cession, discredited any claim of anticipation of Great Britain. This he did in the same three-hour speech in which he favored the ratification of the treaty. At most he would only give slight credence to this motive, for he

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[31] Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (London, 1867), 3rd Series, CLXXXVI, 979-980.

[32] Seward to Adams, House Executive Documents, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, p. 76.

affirmed "Another motive to this acquisition may be found in the desire to anticipate imagined schemes or necessities of Great Britain. With regard to all these I confess doubt; and yet, if we credit report, it would seem as if there were already a British movement in this direction." He then offered some evidence that showed this possibility. A similar view was held by those who said that Great Britain was worried about the presence of Russia on the American shores as Spain had once been. To this argument Sumner replied, "But I hesitate to believe that the British of our day, in any considerable numbers, have adopted the early Spanish disquietude at the presence of Russia on this continent." Hence Sumner also was not anti-British.[33]

From the study of this last proposed reason for the purchase, it seems clear that the United States, that is, the Department of State, did not buy Alaska in order to prevent England from getting it. Indeed the Department would not have wanted the area sold to another power, for example, France. In the light of her relations in the Far East with Great Britain and France, Russia realized that the best move would be to sell the colonies to the United States. But this argument of the anticipation of Great Britain indicates the sale of Alaska, not its purchase by the United States, for Great Britain had greater stakes in the Near Eastern Question, especially with reference to the Dardanelles. On the other hand the

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[33] Sumner, Works, XI, 223-228.

question can be raised concerning the likelihood of the United States trying to buy a piece of territory if the country knows that the purchase would be detrimental to Anglo-American relations. At that time America sought the settlement of the Alabama claims. A peaceful settlement could not be rightfully expected if America bought an area near British possessions with the avowed intention that that transaction would impair relations with Great Britain. The fourth motive for the purchase thus becomes a pseudo-reason.

CHAPTER V

BANKS' LAST TWO REASONS EXAMINED

At the beginning of the previous chapter it was stated that Henry W. Clark had suggested that the fifth and sixth reasons for the purchase -- the creation of new industrial interests on the Pacific necessary to supremacy of our empire on sea and land, and also to secure unlimited commerce with Japan and China--may have some weight. It is the purpose of this chapter to try to determine the validity of these reasons. Once the interests on the Pacific coast have been examined, the acquisition of commerce with Japan and China will be studied, first in its general background, and then, in the light of the interest of Seward in the Far East.

It will be noted that the fifth, as well as the sixth, reason for the purchase is stated in terms of long-term future results. It is as if the purchaser is looking toward the distant future and seeing the possibilities of the purchase in the emolument which can be gained. Hence, although the reason looks toward the future, it can be called a reason, for, if the purchase of Alaska were made, certain benefits would accrue from that action. Thus the action ought to be done. In reality this is the reasoning process

involved in the fifth motive now under discussion, for by the purchase of Alaska new industrial interests on the Pacific would be created. This would result in helping to build the supremacy of our empire on sea and land.

Yet what were those "new industrial interests"? In some respects this has been answered, for in the first reason offered for the purchase--the desire of the Pacific coast citizens for fisheries and other privileges--a study has been made of the possibilities of the fisheries and the fur trade. The fisheries included not only salmon, cod, herring, but also the whaling industry which was looked on by some as a benefit to be derived from the purchase. For instance, the Philadelphia North American and Gazette reported on Friday, April 12, 1867, "With this territory in our possession, we can now establish whaling ports along that whole coast, and ship the products home on coasting voyages."[1] The fur trade was another aspect of interest in the territory as is evidenced by the Russian American Company which, from its inception in 1799, had traded the plentiful seal and sea-otter skins in the distant city of Canton, China. In addition the attempt of Senator Cole to obtain the lease of the panhandle which had been granted to the Hudson's Bay Company is another instance of interest in the fur trade.

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[1] Philadelphia North American and Gazette, April 12, 1867, quoted in House Executive Documents, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. 13, No. 177, p. 39.

Besides the fisheries and the fur trade, other industries were hoped for. Among these were the mining of coal, gold, silver, and copper as well as the production of timber from the forests. Some of these were described in the elaborate speech of Senator Sumner in which he expatiated on the resources of the new country. His speech was a careful compilation of the writings and descriptions of other who had traversed Alaska from about 1790 and later.[2] In order to obtain first hand information about the area, however, Congress authorized a scientific expedition to be sent to explore the territory and to survey its possible advantages to the United States. The expedition left in early June, 1867 and its findings were reported towards the end of the same year. But before the House of Representatives would appropriate any money for the purchase, it requested from the President a report relative to the territory. Using this report submitted by George Davidson, who had been in charge of the scientific expedition, Representative Banks presented a golden picture of all the mineral resources and possible industrial wealth of the country.[3] He was challenged by Washburn of Wisconsin, a bitter opponent of the purchase.

In the debate that followed in the House Washburn objected

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[2] Sumner, Works, XI, 186-349.

[3] For the report of George Davidson, cf. House Executive Documents, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. 13, No. 177, pp. 219-307; also cf. Morgan B. Sherwood, "George Davidson and the Acquisition of Alaska," PHR, XXVIII (May 1959), 141-154.

that Davidson in his report had gathered only some information about the country and had not actually seen or discovered any mineral resources. Banks retorted by offering a private letter from Davidson in which the latter admitted that a seam of coal had been reported on Kachemak Bay, Cook's Inlet, but that the mining of the bed would require more engineering talent than the Russian American Company possessed. Washburn then replied by affirming that there had not been any source of proof offered by which the Congressmen could conclude that a single vein of coal existed in Alaska.[4] At one point in the debate Washburn was accused of reading "only those portions that made against the country."[5] On careful examination however, Banks himself could have been accused of a similar charge, for he seems to have used those portions which would help to win passage of the bill.

In fact both sides could consider themselves correct, for they found what they were looking for in the report which was seriously inadequate about the resources of the territory. The report leaves the reader with many reservations about the potential economic strength of Alaska. Since this report was so indecisive at times, it would be difficult to assess its influence in the passage of the appropriation; for some Congressmen it was an

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[4] U. S. Congress, Congressional Globe, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., July 1, 1868, Appendix (Washington, 1868), p. 398.

[5] Ibid. July 7, 1868, Pt. IV, 3806.

influential factor, but not for others. This split in the House also reveals that not too much was known about the possible industries that could be created as a result of the purchase. Much of the talk about the wealth of Alaska had been gleaned from stories and in some cases from books of those who had been there; but no one could ascertain definitely the extent of these possible industries. Hence this reason for the purchase must be accepted with some reservation. This is not, however, to eliminate it entirely, for it was a subsidiary cause, albeit a much debated one.

Thus far the fifth reason for the purchase has been analyzed. Our attention will be focussed now on the last reason, namely, to secure unlimited commerce with Japan and China. In order to understand how the purchase can be linked to possible commercial development with the Orient, it will be necessary to consider the background of American interests in the Far East before the Civil War. This will be followed by a discussion of Seward's interest in this area during his term as Secretary of State. Finally the strategic importance of Alaska as this affected his interest in the Far East will be investigated.

Even before the Constitution had been ratified in 1789, Americans had been interested in the Far Eastern trade. As early as 1784 Robert Morris of Philadelphia and a group of New York merchants fitted out the Empress of China for a voyage to Canton. Since the Americans no longer traded with Great Britain, they were forced to seek other markets, which were readily found in the

Orient. But to speak of an early American policy in Asia is to speak of the policy of the early Americans there, for there was no other policy. This appeared only when there was any obstruction to the trade and hence the policy was defensive and negative, as was clear when the American trade had been opposed and obstructed on the Pacific Ocean and specifically on the Northwest Coast. Once the fur trade declined as part of the Far Eastern trade in 1820, American interests in the Far East became stagnant. Although some Americans had learned to view the Pacific Ocean in relation to the Asiatic trade, it was not until Japan was opened, Shanghai developed, and the Pacific coast settled that the American policy in Asia again included the Pacific Ocean. Then the policy no longer was that of individual citizens, but of the Department of State.[6]

As part of the formulation of this policy, the United States ratified treaties with Far Eastern nations, the first of which was with the kingdom of Siam in 1833. Eleven years later America signed the Treaty of Wanghia with China by which some of the privileges accorded the British by the Treaty of Nanking two years previously were also granted to the United States. In their trade with China the British were faced with American competition and with an attitude toward that trade different from their own.

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[6]Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia: A Critical Study of the Policy of the United States with Reference to China, Japan, and Korea in the 19th Century (New York, 1941), pp. 69-70.

Although some Americans advocated armed force to protect their rights, the State Department again and again counseled moderation.[7] Thus the United States was spared from the odious task of participating in a war against China.

Yet with the development of European commerce in China, it could hardly be expected that the nations of Korea and Japan would be allowed to maintain their policy of exclusion. Although the Dutch alone controlled the right to trade directly with Japan, and the flags of Great Britain and France had been seen in Japanese waters, to two western countries the opening of Japan was extremely important. Russia on the north had penetrated as far south as the Kurile Islands and sought the possession of Karafuto (Sakhalin) in order to complete her domination of the Amur River Valley. Her advance was a source of worry to Japan, not so much commercially as politically. Yet in the case of the United States commercial interests predominated, for with the development of direct shipping between San Francisco and Shanghai the Japanese islands were on a direct route. Thus the United States stood to gain from the opening of Japanese ports more than any other commercial state.[8] Hence it was that in 1853 Commodore Mathew C.

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[7]Payson J. Treat, "The Foundations of American Policy in the Far East," The Semicentenary Celebration of the Founding of the University of California with an Account of the Conference on International Relations, 1868-1918 (Berkeley, 1919), p.347.

[8]Payson J. Treat, The Early Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan: 1853-1865 (Baltimore, 1917), p. 11.

Perry opened Japan and was able in the following year to sign a treaty of friendship with the Japanese Empire. A comparison of this treaty with the Treaty of Wanghia ten years earlier shows that Perry had worked diligently and yet gained very little. But to stop at this comparison would be unfair, for the treaty was looked upon by him as part of the foundations for an American commercial empire in Asia and in the Pacific. He was not interested in protecting American mercantile interests in Japan alone, but he coupled these interests with the political issues of Asia and of the Pacific and viewed them as a whole. His treaty was but a partial answer to the solution of this problem.[9]

In brief then, American prestige in Asia had risen to a point where Americans could influence and determine the policy of other nations. Not only had she been successful in opening Japan, but also the American ministers and consuls in China had performed their tasks creditably. The British and the French surrendered their exclusive concessions granted them by the Chinese government, a system of maritime inspection under foreign control had been established, and no chance was afforded these nations to intervene in favor of the Taiping rebels. These were some of the outstanding results of the American policy of strengthening and supporting the Chinese government. These achievements were not the result so much of the instructions of the Department of State,

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[9] Dennett, p. 270.

but of the sagacity of the ministers and consuls themselves and the position of neutrality that the United States assumed during the Crimean War.

During the Buchanan administration American influence in Asia began to wane, principally because domestic problems in the United States eclipsed any interest in Far Eastern international relations. To build on the foundation so far created little effort was expended. Yet there was one exception to this statement, for the treaty of Townsend Harris in 1858 with Japan became "the most brilliant diplomatic achievement of the United States in Asia for the entire century . . ."[10] This was not due to any instructions from President Buchanan or Secretary of State Cass, but to the skilful diplomacy of Harris alone.

By 1861 through diplomatic maneuvering at once characterized by foresight and expediency the American government had arrived at a fairly definite Far Eastern policy. Created out of precedents and decisions, this policy was founded upon the "most-favored nation" principle, equivalent to the "open-door" policy, and was incorporated into two treaties, one with Japan, the other with China. This policy included the decision not to acquire any territorial possessions or protectorates in Asia or the Pacific Ocean; and the determination to sustain China, and by inference Japan, thus fixing the United States as opposing any movement of the

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[10] Ibid. 293.

Western powers to interfere with the territorial integrity or the political sovereignty of Asiatic states. Ultimately this would lead to the maintenance of an open door by the states themselves. Notwithstanding her favoring this principle, the United States also had sought cooperation with the other treaty powers in all peaceful measures to obtain the fulfillment of the treaties and the protection of foreign interests. The cooperative policy did not include alliances, for the American government refused to enter into one with Great Britain and France during their gun-boat policy against China in 1857-1860. Nor would the United States endorse the policy of joint treaties as can be seen by the individual treaties with the various governments of the Western powers signed at Tientsin. Upon these foundations Secretary of State William H. Seward had to build in the eventful years 1861-1869.[11]

Before taking his new position in 1861, Seward had already formulated certain positive opinions on the nature, purpose, and future of American international relations in the Far East. As senator from New York he supported American interests in the Orient, principally the establishment of American foreign trade on a firmer basis. In his opinion the Pacific Ocean would become "the chief theatre in the events of the world's great hereafter," for he was certain that the American people had a definite role to

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[11] Ibid. 407.

play in the development of the commerce on that ocean.[12] Americans should contribute their political heritage, not military strength to the peoples of Asia, for as the Atlantic states were helping in the social and political development of the states of Europe and Africa, so also "the Pacific states must necessarily perform the same sublime and beneficent functions in Asia." Seward felt that Asia so enriched by America would repay the gift with gratitude.[13]

In Seward's mind the value of the Pacific coast was paramount. Although he held certain convictions on the question of slavery, he was even more convinced that the admission of California as a state, even if it became slave territory, was far outweighed by the advantages it would give to the American Pacific coast. He wholeheartedly supported the Japan expedition, urged the completion of the surveys of the Pacific Ocean, and above all, was conspicuous in his leadership of the projected transcontinental railroad and the beginning of a line of mail steamers from San Francisco by way of the Sandwich Islands to Japan and China. All of these policies were epitomized by his statement in the Senate on January 26, 1853. In his speech entitled "Continental Rights and Relations" he showed his audience that the commerce of the world was to be sought "not on the American lakes, nor on the Atlantic

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[12] U. S. Congress, Congressional Globe, 32nd Cong., 1st Sess., July 29, 1852, Vol. 24, Pt. III (Washington, 1852), p. 1975.

[13] Ibid. 31st Cong., 1st Sess., March 11, 1850, Vol. 22, Pt. I (Washington, 1850), p. 262.

coast, nor on the Caribbean sea, nor on the Mediterranean, nor on the Baltic, nor on the Atlantic ocean, but on the Pacific ocean, and its islands and continents." He urged the senators to watch closely the movements of France, Russia, and Great Britain especially in the areas where they were to be found "on those continents and seas in the East where the prize which you are contending with them for is to be found."[14] From the roster of conspicuous leaders of that day Lincoln chose a secretary of state who had reflected on the Far Eastern question and America's role therein.

Without retraversing ground that has already been scrutinized, it must be remembered that the primary interests of Seward in 1861 and later were those of the Civil War, especially the possible recognition of the independence of the South by other nations. Although this interest was primary, Seward did not allow himself to be unconcerned about the Far East where he found that the United States was committed to a policy of cooperation. This he heartily endorsed for it would gather together the European nations in a group with, not against, the United States at the opening of the war. Furthermore, the European nations, especially France and Great Britain, also favored such cooperation for they had already seized what they wanted from China.

From July, 1861 until November, 1867 Seward was fortunately blessed with a most capable minister in China, Anson Burlingame.

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[14]Seward, Works, III, 618.

Although he entered the China scene after the storm of the Opium War of 1857-1860, Burlingame was able to do constructive work in the further development of an American policy in China. A masterful person, capable of commanding a diplomatic situation, the American minister was predominant in Peking, and hence over American policy in China. Seward was shrewd enough to sense this, so the customary long instructions were not sent to Burlingame. Rather Seward's role was to approve the action of Burlingame; the Secretary of State "initiated nothing except the immigration section of the Treaty of 1868" which, though often called the Burlingame Treaty, might more properly be called the Seward Treaty.[15]

An opportunity to instruct the new minister presented itself when Seward sent a despatch approving Burlingame's conduct in the Taiping Rebellion, and added that he should put forth every effort to consult and cooperate with the other representatives. Even before the despatch arrived, the American minister already had adopted this program as part of his policy.[16] A few months after the end of the Civil War Seward reiterated his program for China: "The Government of the United States is not disposed to be technical or exacting in its intercourse with the Chinese Government, but

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[15] Dennett, p. 410.

[16] Seward to Burlingame, March 6, 1862, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, p. 839.

but will deal with it in entire frankness, cordiality and friendship. The United States desires neither to interfere with the distinct and ancient habits and customs of the Chinese people, nor to embarrass the members of the foreign board in their difficult and responsible task."[17] Such were the statements that helped to maintain the cooperative policy of sustaining the Chinese Imperial Government.

Outside of China, however, Seward's policy of cooperation took on different aspects, so much so that he pursued a policy at times patently un-American. When he was informed from Yedo in May, 1861 that it seemed that the Japanese might disregard the treaties of 1858 and perhaps expel the foreigners, Seward proposed a joint naval expedition against Japan. He addressed the ministers of the respective governments that had diplomatic relations with Japan and urged them to a projected convention that "contemplated the dispatch of a fleet of steamers adequate to impress the Japanese government with the ability and the determination of the states engaged, to secure the performance of its treaty stipulations."[18] Townsend Harris, the American minister to Japan, disapproved of such a move and felt that Seward did not understand the situation in Japan. The expedition never materialized, however, much to the

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[17] Seward to Burlingame, August 14, 1865, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, Pt. II, No. 1, p. 461.

[18] Seward to Townsend Harris, August 1, 1861, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, No. 1, Pt. I, p. 814.

credit of the United States. Yet even then Seward would again use this policy in Japan and even attempt the same in Korea.[19]

An interesting light is cast not only on Seward's policy but also his methods by an incident of which he was informed in the early months of 1867, the same time as the purchase of Alaska occurred. S. Wells Williams, the chargé d'affaires at Peking during Burlingame's absence on leave to the United States, notified Seward that some French missionaries had been put to death in Korea, and that Admiral Roze with some French naval vessels had gone there to investigate the matter. Upon their return the Admiral informed Williams that he had learned from Korean natives that in August, 1866 an American trading schooner, the General Sherman, had been caught in a river in Korea and the Americans had been killed.[20] By December Burlingame, having returned to China, was able to inform Seward that the French chargé, M. de Bellonet, had formally notified the minister of state in China, Prince Kung, that France would attempt the conquest of Korea and would establish a protectorate there.[21]

The facts behind the Franco-Korean situation need not detain

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[19] For examples of the future use of this policy, cf. Tyler Dennett, "Seward's Far Eastern Policy," AHR, XXVIII (October 1922) 49-50.

[20] Williams to Seward, October 24, 1866, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, pp. 414-417.

[21] Burlingame to Seward, December 12, 1866, ibid. 419; for the Bellonet-Kung correspondence, cf. ibid. 419-427.

us, since our purpose is to investigate the matter from the American viewpoint. Four days after receiving the despatch from Burlingame, Seward, not knowing that the French government had repudiated the action of Bellonet, spoke to M. Berthemy, the French minister in Washington. The Secretary of State then proceeded to outline a plan for the American forces to join the French to obtain reparations from the Koreans for the murders of the French and the Americans, and then conclude a treaty with the nation similar to those which had been made with Japan and China. The French minister was somewhat surprised at the proposal but approved of it. Yet before the American proposal had reached Paris, the French government, faced with the failure of the Mexican flasco and Admiral Roze's abortive expedition, found it necessary to announce that the first reports from Korea were misleading and that a great victory had been won by France.[22] Hence there was no reason for carrying out the American proposal. Once again Seward was saved from what would have been a disgraceful action, for, as the facts proved later, the General Sherman had no right to enter the Korean river and its crew apparently had started the hostilities. The incident was part of the price Seward was willing to pay for a policy of cooperation in the Far East.

Another glance at this proposal, however, reveals some fresh aspects. The proposed treaty with Korea seems to have been some-

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[22] Dennett, AHR, XXVIII, 52-58.

what like the treaty of the purchase of Alaska. In the contemplated action against Korea Seward did not mention the necessity of obtaining the consent from Congress as he had done earlier in the joint naval expedition against Japan in 1861. It appears as if he wanted to circumvent the Senate and then present it with a treaty with Korea, as he did a few weeks later in the purchase of Alaska. In addition, Seward concealed from Stoeckl his reasons for favoring the purchase of Alaska, just as he had done a few weeks earlier. On this point Dennett has remarked, "The conjunction of the two negotiations at least makes reasonable the conjecture that the purchase of Alaska was a piece of Far Eastern policy the full significance of which is not yet realized."[23]

Are there any other details which seem to have been omitted which show a connection between Seward's Far Eastern policy and the purchase of Alaska? It is true that Dennett has shown that Kiska in the Aleutian Islands was a good American port nearest to the northern Asiatic coast, but he goes on to speak of the interest of Japan in America's possession in the Five-Power Naval Treaty of 1922.[24] In his book, Americans in Eastern Asia, Dennett states, ". . . it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Seward saw in Alaska and the Aleutian Islands a way of 'extending a friendly hand to Asia.' "[25] He then points out that Frederick Seward, the

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[23] Ibid. 60.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, p. 416. This work was first published in 1922 and reprinted in 1941.

Secretary's son, has shown that the motive back of the purchase was the desire for advanced naval outposts in the north Pacific and the West Indies which had been lacking during the Civil War.[26]

This argument about the need of naval stations is also substantiated by a statement Seward made at Rutland, Vermont on September 2, 1852. Speaking of the necessity of American expansion, Seward asked what the explorations and expeditions about Japan and the Sandwich Islands meant "but the necessity of naval stations in the Pacific ocean?"[27] Similarly President Johnson in his annual message to Congress on December 3, 1867 affirmed that during the Civil War there was a "universal feeling of the want of an advanced outpost between the Atlantic coast and Europe." This was also true on the Pacific coast where the required foothold was "fortunately secured by our late treaty with the Emperor of Russia . . ."[28] If it is recalled that Seward announced the possession of Midway Island in September, 1867, and also reaffirmed that the annexation of the Sandwich Islands was desirable, it will be seen that his son's assertion is true.

However, it is not too clear how the purchase of Alaska and

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[26] Frederick W. Seward, Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State, 1861-1872 (New York, 1891), III, 347.

[27] Seward, Works, III, 187.

[28] Annual Message of the President, December 3, 1867, House Executive Documents, Vol. 1, Pt. I, No. 1, p. 20.

the Aleutians would help to "extend a friendly hand to Asia." A glance at the map will show that Kiska was the nearest good harbor to northern Asia. The problem is, did Seward see this? In other words, can a motive for the purchase by Seward be his knowledge of the nearness of Alaska and the Aleutians as a stepping-stone to Asia? He already knew of the amount and growth of commerce with China and Japan. Did he buy Alaska in order to "facilitate and secure unlimited commerce with Japan and China" which Banks has offered as the sixth reason for the purchase? Let us see if the problem can be solved.

A careful scrutiny of the published works of Seward and the diplomatic correspondence during his term of office reveals at least one source concerning his direct knowledge of the strategic position of Alaska. In his speech urging the Senate to approve a resolution for the exploration of the courses of navigation used by American whaling vessels in the region of the Bering Straits, Senator Seward displayed a keen knowledge of Pacific Ocean geography which he obtained from information supplied him by Lieutenant M. F. Maury of the Naval Observatory. Among the places Seward mentioned for this exploration were the coasts of Palawan, the West London, Prince of Wales and Paulo Sapata Islands, and the coasts of China and Formosa. He continued: "Then proceeding northwardly, a regard to the safety of the whaleman demands that the islands between the coasts of China and Japan, and from them to the Loo Choo Islands, and so on to the Russian possessions, and

along them eastwardly to Behring's Straits, should be surveyed. . . . Lastly, . . . we encounter islands, and many shoals imperfectly defined, and especially the Bonin Islands; while prudence requires a careful reconnoissance also of the Fox Islands, which, although lying somewhat northwardly of the passage, might . . . afford shelter in case of inclement weather." In conclusion he stated that because such a survey was lacking the United States could not choose or establish a coaling station, although the length of the voyage was seven thousand miles.[29]

Besides this statement, there are two indirect sources which Seward knew about and helped to broadcast so that the purchase might be accomplished. The first of these is the speech which Senator Sumner delivered in favor of ratification of the purchase. A few statements that have seemingly been hitherto overlooked may shed some light on the purchase. Seward's son had stated that his father was searching for needed naval outposts in the north Pacific. It is rather curious that Sumner reiterates this point in his speech by showing that the absence of harbors on the Pacific in the possession of the United States had limited the influence of America there. Beyond Puget Sound, however, the harbors were more abundant and were "all nearer to the great marts of Japan and China." But even if no new harbors were opened, San Francisco itself

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[29] Congressional Globe, 32nd Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. 24, Pt. III, p. 1975.

would be closer to the East by way of the Aleutians than by way of Honolulu. In order to clarify this point, Sumner went on to say that from a cursory glance at a map a voyage from San Francisco to Hong Kong by the common way of the Sandwich Islands was 7,140 miles, but the same trip by way of the Aleutians was 6,060 miles, approximately a thousand miles less. Thus a ship could not only get its stores there faster, but with the advantage of carrying much less coal. He added that a voyage from Sitka or from Puget Sound, the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, would still be shorter than the distance stated.[30]

What Sumner was offering here was a discussion of the great circle route from San Francisco to Shanghai and Canton by way of the Fox or Aleutian Islands. This had been suggested as early as January 10, 1847 by Lieutenant M. F. Maury of the Naval Observatory in a letter to T. Butler King, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, who had requested more data on the proposed route which Maury had previously suggested. The proceedings in the House terminated in a joint resolution of the House and the Senate which stated that the Secretary of the Navy should "establish a line of war steamers . . . from one of the above ports on the American coast [i.e., Monterey or San Francisco] by way of the Aleutian, or Fox Islands, to Shanghai, and thence to Canton,

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30 Sumner, Works, XI, 218.

in China."[31] It is almost improbable that Seward did not know about this route since it was from Lieutenant Maury that he got his information about the Pacific Ocean for his speech two years later. Nor does it appear likely that he would be ignorant of the joint resolution which referred to a topic about which he later spoke in the Senate.

Sumner's statement about the great circle route was actually investigated. Reference has already been made to the report of George Davidson of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. He had been sent on a scientific expedition in June, 1867 to explore Alaska in conjunction with Captain W. A. Howard of the Revenue Service, at that time a part of the Treasury Department. They were to make a geographical reconnaissance of the coast and report on the physical features and resources of the country in the time allotted for the expedition.

In his report to Superintendent Benjamin Peirce of the Survey, dated November 30, 1867, Davidson showed that he had been studying the currents and winds about the Japanese waters, their effects on the climate of Alaska, and also their "effect upon the question of the great circle route from San Francisco to China." He added that "the currents, their effects upon the weather and the prevailing westerly winds, will, in the absence of the strongest advantages,

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[31] Cf. U. S. Congress, House of Representatives, Reports of the Committees of the House of Representatives, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. 3, No. 596 (Washington, 1848), pp. 10-23.

decide the question against the great circle route from San Francisco to Yokochama, or even to Hokodadi." He explained that the Colorado had tried to take this route from Asia to America, but, because of fog and heavy currents, was forced to take the southern route. On a westward trip a ship would encounter adverse winds the whole distance and adverse currents about two-thirds of the way.

If a few extra days were needed because of bad weather, the coal supply would run short. Under such circumstances the greatest inducement for adopting this route would be "the discovery of deposits of good coal among the Aleutian Islands, or within a reasonable distance of the harbor nearest the great circle route."[32]

Hope of finding a source of coal was shattered, however, when Captain Howard reported to Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch that from information he had received from the officers of the Russian American Company and the captains of steamers on the coast, the "coals on all the Aleutian Islands are too light, with too much residuum for steaming purposes." Representative Washburn made use of this statement to show Alaska's worthlessness in his report against the proposed appropriation.[33] After the expedition returned to the United States, Davidson held conferences with Seward and

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[32] Davidson to Peirce, November 30, 1867, House Executive Documents, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. 13, No. 177, p. 241.

[33] House Report, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 37, pp. 57-58.

McCulloch in order to explain his report.[34]

There are some facets of these events that seem more than coincidental. If it is accepted that Seward was interested in naval outposts as his son stated and as Seward's schemes for getting San Domingo and St. Thomas in the Caribbean also show, would it be too much to conjecture that Seward had offered the evidence of the short distance between San Francisco and Canton to Sumner? Though the scientific expedition was sent with the purpose of determining new coaling stations, it was discovered that the theory could not be put into practice. Nonetheless the problem presents itself as to who had such an inquiry incorporated as a possible part of the investigation for the expedition? Who ordered Davidson to inquire about the great circle route? The only possibility seems to be Seward who was intensely interested in building and strengthening commerce with Japan and China. His projected expedition against Korea made but a few weeks before the Alaska purchase has been noted. Two years later in a speech at Sitka he affirmed that the fur trade had been the sole basis of Russian commerce on this continent, and that it was understood "that the supply of furs in Alaska has not diminished, while the demand for them in China and elsewhere has immensely increased."[35] Thus there are indications by which it can be asserted that Seward saw

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[34] Davidson, The Alaska Boundary, p. 13.

[35] Seward, Works, V, 564.

the strategic importance of Alaska in the development of commerce in the Far East.

At this point it might be well to restate our position. It is not affirmed that Seward clearly and concisely saw that Alaska was strategically important. For this there is not ample evidence, but it is suggested that, given his knowledge and interest in the Far East and the Pacific Ocean, and given the fact that the purchase included the Aleutians as well, Seward bought Alaska to facilitate and secure unlimited commerce with Japan and China. Otherwise the last reason offered by Banks seems empty, for knowledge of the commercial value of Alaska itself was not too well known as has been shown. The purchase of an unknown commercial value could help to facilitate and secure an unlimited commerce with Japan and China only because of its strategic position on the Pacific, a stepping-stone to Far Eastern Asia.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study it has become apparent that the purchase of Alaska was not an isolated incident in the history of the United States, because for nearly a century Americans had been interested in the Pacific Northwest. Believing that she had better claims than any other rival there, Russia asserted extreme pretensions in the ukase of 1821. In reply, the American government affirmed the Monroe Doctrine and eventually was able to come to some understanding with Russia in the treaty of 1824. Great Britain, also opposing Russia's pretensions, partially settled the problem by a treaty with Russia in the following year. Although some misinterpretations of these treaties followed, no serious rupture occurred. Meanwhile Russia, whose interests conflicted with British interests in the Mediterranean Sea and the Straits, was engaged in the Crimean War. This resulted in the Russian government's change of attitude towards her American colonies which were now open to attack by British ships. Some Americans tried to purchase the Russian possessions, but without success, partially because the Civil War interrupted any further attempts. Even then the Russian American Company had proved its inability to govern its colonies,

since every time the charter was to be renewed, investigations were made; but the colonies continued to be a serious liability, not an asset, to the Russian government. By December, 1866 the sale of the colonies was agreed upon, and in March of the following year the United States became the new possessor.

For Russia, interested again in the complete acquisition of the Amur River Valley, and realizing that the colonies were a burden on the economy and defenseless in time of war, the move was a wise one. But if Russia had not been successful in obtaining revenue from Alaska, what assurance did the United States have? Why then did the American government purchase the territory? It is hoped that this study of the six reasons offered by Representative Nathaniel P. Banks has answered that question.

In the background of the purchase were the friendly Russo-American relations which favored such speedy, successful negotiations. Although Russia did not seek to sell the colonies to Great Britain lest it become more powerful, the United States, on the other hand, did not purchase the territory out of the necessity of preventing England from getting the area. Why this was so has been clarified from a study of Anglo-American relations in the post-Civil War period. In order to expedite the sale, the Russian government refused to renew the charter of the Russian American Company. On America's part, some citizens of the Pacific coast began to agitate for fisheries and other privileges. And yet

because of the scant knowledge of the resources of Russian America, the fifth reason--the creation of new industries on the Pacific--exercised only a minor role whose extent was difficult to determine. Lastly, how the purchase secured unlimited commerce with Japan and China was studied within the framework of Seward's interest in the Far East. In the days when steamers were used in transoceanic shipping, coaling stations and the shortest routes were the answers to the achievements of any leading maritime nation. It was suggested that Seward, knowing this, also realized the strategic importance of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands toward the development of American commerce in the Far East. In brief, then, five of the six reasons offered by Representative Nathaniel P. Banks played their part in inducing the United States to purchase Alaska.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **John W. Witek, S.J.**

has been read and approved by three members of the Department of **history.**

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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